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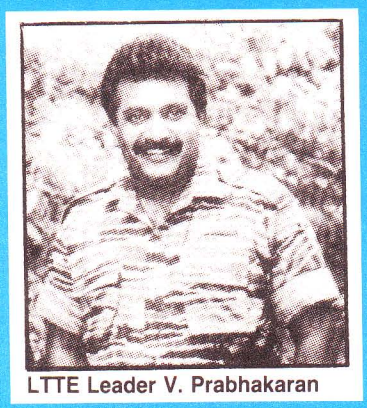
President Mrs. C. Kumaratunga

CESSATION OF HOSTILITIES BETWEEN GOVT. AND LTTE



LTTE Leader V. Prabhakaran

★ **A Time Not For War But For Peace**

★ **President Explains Peace Talks with LTTE**

★ **Govt's Policy Statement**

★ **The Case for Federalism**

★ **Decommunalising Public Institutions**

★ **Buddhist Monks Protest Over Pope's Book**

★ **Peace in Sri Lanka: Wishful Thinking or Reality?**

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'I do not agree with a word of what you say, but I'll defend to the death your right to say it.'
– Voltaire.

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Cessation of Hostilities and the Peace Process

The year 1995 started with renewed hope for peace in Sri Lanka. The second round of talks between the Government delegation and the LTTE leadership on 2 January resulted in an agreement for a cessation of armed hostilities between the warring parties. For the first time since June 1990, the guns have gone silent as the formal cessation of hostilities came into effect from 8 January. Initially expected to last only up to 22 January, the parties have agreed during their round of talks on 14 January to a further indefinite extension of the cessation of hostilities.

The provision in the declaration for setting up monitoring committees comprising representatives drawn from Canada, Netherlands and Norway to monitor violations of the cessation of hostilities by either party ensures an input by independent third parties to see that neither party takes undue advantage. The prohibition in the declaration of acts such as 'sabotage, bomb explosions, abductions, assassinations and intimidations directed at any political group, party or any individual' is a welcome provision given the history of the commission of many such acts in the past.

In her presidential address to the opening session of Parliament, Mrs. Chandrika Bandaranaike announced that the Government had earmarked Rs.39 billion for rehabilitation and reconstruction works in the war-torn northeastern areas, and expressed the hope that the cessation of hostilities between her Government and the LTTE would pave the way for a lasting solution.

Following the third round of talks between the Government delegation and the LTTE, in a further effort to alleviate the economic hardship and living conditions of the civilian population of the north, the Government has agreed to the lifting of the prohibition imposed on the transport of 22 more banned items to Jaffna excluding ball bearings, motorcycle parts, diesel, petrol, chemicals and lead.

In spite of the great expectations among the people for quick progress to be made in the peace process, the parties would appear to have encountered certain obstacles which became evident during the third round of talks. It would seem that the Government wants to discuss with the LTTE the substantive political issues relating to the conflict at the same time as they progress on issues relating to the economic and infrastructure rehabilitation works, or at least wants a date set for talks relating to political issues. On the LTTE side, it would seem that there is reluctance to commence talks on the political issues at present. Their position would appear to be that talks on the political issues should take place only after the total lifting of the ban on the transport of all banned items, the total removal of the army camp at Pooneryn and the opening of the Sangupiddy-Pooneryn causeway. They also would appear to be saying that all works relating to rehabilitation and reconstruction in the north and east should be carried out under their control. As far as the question of opening a free passage between Jaffna and the mainland is concerned, the Government's position is that the Elephant Pass has remained open for civilian use and it would be prepared to sign an agreement with the LTTE promising not to use this Pass for military purposes or troop movements. It is also prepared to move the army camp at Pooneryn to a distance of five hundred metres away from the causeway.

It is unfortunate that the third round of talks has been adjourned without a date being set for the resumption of talks between the Government and the LTTE.

If the peace process is to be advanced, talks ought to continue without any preconditions being set by either party, and this has been the demand made by the LTTE for the last four years to the previous Government to which the Government did not respond. The present Government initiated peace talks with the LTTE and even in the face of obvious reluctance on the part of the Sri Lankan military, positively responded to the LTTE's suggestion for a cessation of hostilities as a basis for creating the right atmosphere for peace talks.

The causes of the ethnic conflict are basically political and the resolution of the political issues is an absolute prerequisite for the elimination of the tragic and damaging consequences that have affected the people of the northeast during the last several years of armed conflict. While the opening of a free passage for people and rehabilitation and reconstruction works are necessary to bring the living conditions of the people to a tolerable level, one cannot justify any delay or reluctance to discuss the political issues with a view to seeking a solution to this conflict.

A Time Not For War But For Peace

by Rita Sebastian, Colombo

The Kumaratunga government has, despite criticism from its opponents at its 'floundering inefficiency and ineptitude' showed in recent days a remarkable resilience in a variety of fields.

In dealing with the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) it has combined shrewdness with idealism. The present initiative of President Chandrika Kumaratunga has given a new momentum to the peace process.

On her return from her much criticised holiday in the Maldives, she despatched a peace team to the north with a draft agreement for the cessation of hostilities. She was ready to sign it, if LTTE leader Vellupillai Prabhakaran would do the same.

The LTTE was said to have been taken aback by the move. It was too good an offer to pass up, for it could be argued that it gave legitimacy and parity of status to Prabhakaran. Kumaratunga signed the document as President of the country and Prabhakaran as the leader of the LTTE.

The impact on the people needless to say has been good. The Government's offer of the rupees 39 billion rehabilitation package has also served to underline the point that Chandrika Kumaratunga is solicitous of the welfare of the people in the north.

Few leaders in Colombo have had this image. Her immediate predecessor President Dingiri Banda Wijetunge was seen as an unabashed war monger. Even her mother Mrs Sirima Bandaranaike, a previous Prime Minister, was seen as a votary of Sinhala interests and programmes.

By offering the Rs. 39 billion rehabilitation package, Mrs Kumaratunga has shown that she has the imagination to break out of the traditional mould. She has also put the LTTE on the spot by allowing international overseeing of the cessation of hostilities. Three of the countries that have agreed to send in representatives are Norway, the Netherlands and Canada perceived to be sympathetic to the 'Tamil cause'. Human rights organisations in these countries have taken up the cause of the Tamils. The LTTE therefore stands to forfeit their sympathy if they don't actively subscribe to the peace process. And they cannot be oblivious to international opinion as India is seen as hostile to the LTTE.

Just as interesting is the fact that the Kumaratunga government has obtained acquiesence of India. Many argue that it is too large a country to get involved in the island's 'petty parochial politics' and that no good can come from such involvement, though a strong LTTE lobby in India as well as anti-elements argue that since the military option has not worked out, to pursue this course would be futile for militant groups feed on grievances. And therefore these grievances have to be addressed. It is for this reason that India is supportive of the Chandrika initiative. For now has come a time not to wage war but peace.

In another move on the economy the Kumaratunga government has announced what might prove to be a significant programme of privatisation. The government might sell off its minority holdings in already privatised concerns. And in the next two years or so it might push privatisation further with regard to banks and infrastructure facilities.

For a left-leaning government it is a significant, even a dramatic statement of direction. The government has shown that it is not hidebound by ideology but has a capacity for fresh and creative thinking.

All in all the government's stock which has been pretty low has rallied, spelling hope for the future.

The Unholy Row

by Rita Sebastian

A theological much ado about nothing. Pope John Paul's visit to Colombo seems to have touched off a controversy which is largely incomprehensible to any but those well versed in arcane theological points. What Sri Lanka's Buddhist hierarchy have taken exception to is the Pope's reference to Buddhism as an 'atheistic' philosophy in his book 'Crossing the threshold of Hope'.

One observer dismisses the whole thing as a most 'unholy' row reminisicent of mediæval theological hair-splitting. One of the points at issue is whether Buddhism subscribes to the belief in the mystical union with God.

One defender of the Buddhist faith said this was impossible because Buddhism does not subscribe to the idea of God, at least in the conventional Christian sense. It is in this rarified plane that this theological controversy of much ado about nothing is conducted leaving ordinary followers of the Buddhist and Catholic faiths largely bemused and puzzled.

The Buddhist High priests, bishops and archbishops not to speak of freelancing philosophers have all pitched into this airy fairy battle with both energy and glee happy to display their learning in newspapers. To add to the confusion there was even a whispering campaign at one point that the Catholics might stake a claim to a piece of the Galle Face promenade where Pope John Paul will say mass in the presence of half a million people. It was even suggested that the Catholic church was going to erect a permanent cross and in due course erect a shrine of some kind. However this kind of over-heated imaginative nonsense was dismissed categorically by the catholic church. This has put paid at least to this part of the controversy.

The Pope's visit seems to have also created another controversy in the north of the country where the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) and the government are involved in a controversy about north-south access routes.

There is however nothing arcane about the arguments both sides have put forward. The LTTE would like the Sangupiddy-Pooneryn route to be opened. The army cries foul seeing in it a plot to grab Pooneryn. The army would like Elephant pass opened. Now it is the turn of the LTTE to cry foul seeing in the army proposal a plot to open the high road into the peninsula. Peace makers have suggested both routes be opened. It is likely that neither route will be opened and people from Jaffna will cross the lagoon.

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President Kumaratunga and LTTE leader Prabhakaran Sign

Declaration of Cessation of Hostilities

The modalities for the implementation of the agreed Cessation of Hostilities by the Government and LTTE for a specified period will be as follows:-

1. There will be no offensive operations by either party during this period. An offensive operation will be considered a violation of the agreement.

2. The Security Forces and the LTTE will maintain their present positions on the ground, keeping a minimum of 600 metres between each other. However, each party would reserve the right of movement within 100 metres from their own bunker lines, keeping a minimum of 400 metres in between. Any party moving in the restricted areas would be considered an offensive operation.

3. The Navy and the Air Force will continue to perform their legitimate tasks of safeguarding the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the country, from external aggression, without in any way engaging in offensive operations against the LTTE, or causing any obstructions to legitimate and bonafide fishing activity in specified areas.

4. Acts such as sabotage, bomb explosions, abductions, assassinations and intimidations directed at any political group, party or any individual will amount to an offensive operation.

5. a. It is suggested that Committees to deal with violations of this agreement be set up to inquire into any instances of violation of the above terms of agreement. These Committees could be set-up in the areas of Jaffna, Mannar, Vavuniya, Mulaitivu, Trincomalee and Batticaloa-Ampara and any other areas as deemed necessary.

b. It will be the responsibility of these Committees to take immediate action on complaints made by either party to this agreement to inquire into and resolve such disputes.

c. These Committees could comprise representatives drawn from Canada, Netherlands, Norway, I.C.R.C, and from among retired Judges or Public Officers, Religious Heads and other leading citizens; all appointed by mutual agreement.

d. Each Committee could consist of five members, viz:

02 from Government;

02 from L.T.T.E; and

01 from a Foreign Country who will be Chairman

e. Freedom of movement for the Committees to perform their tasks will have to be ensured by both parties to this agreement.

f. Facilities required for the Committees to act swiftly and impartially, will have to be provided by mutual agreement.

6. Recommend establishment of communication link between S.F. and L.T.T.E. military area leaders which will enable them to sort out problems expeditiously, locally.

7. Cessation of hostilities will continue till notice of termination is given by either party. Such notice should be given at least 72 hours before termination.

Signed on 5 January, 1995

V. Prabhakaran
Leader
Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam

Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga
President of Sri Lanka, and
Commander in Chief of the Armed Forces.

Peace Talks With the LTTE President Kumaratunga Explains

The government has given the LTTE the assurance that the Elephant Pass road could be opened up for the purposes of civilian traffic and that road would not be used for military operations at all. She said the government had offered to enter into an agreement with the LTTE on this matter, President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga told the press on 6 January, at the Parliamentary Complex.

She was meeting the press after the ceremonial opening of the second session of Third Parliament.

Answering a question whether the government was considering removal of the Pooneryn camp, Mrs Kumaratunga said that the government would not vacate the Pooneryn army detachment and this would not hamper the peace negotiations as the issue of the vacation of the Pooneryn camp had not been a condition the LTTE had put forward for negotiating peace. She further said that the government had no intention of giving up positions of advantage the military had achieved. But, she said, the government had offered a second round of peace talks to withdraw Forward Defence Lines (FDLs) of the Pooneryn camp five hundred metres from the main road to facilitate the movement of civilians.

Minister of Irrigation, Power and Energy and Deputy Minister of Defence Col. Anuruddha Ratwatte said that the government delegation had intimated this offer to the LTTE, but the LTTE was not agreeable.

The President when asked whether it was true that the government was giving in too much to the LTTE while the LTTE refused to budge, said that there was no truth in such stories. She also answered in the negative a question whether the government which is conceding to the LTTE's economic demands, will finally be compelled to resort to military action against the LTTE.

The President said that there will be formed six committees to deal with violations of the cessation of hostilities between the government troops and the LTTE.

Answering a question whether, as the government and the LTTE seek foreign representation in the committees to deal with violations of the cessation of hostilities, she said the government encouraged foreign mediation in the north and east conflict, and that the government was not against such mediation 'in a limited way.'

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Journalist: *Including India?*

President: We consider India a friend but the LTTE does not.

Journalist: *Is India being kept informed of what is going on?*

Minister of Foreign Affairs Lakshman Kadirgamar said that the diplomats from other countries were informed of the peace negotiations from time to time and India had not even asked the government to inform it of the peace negotiations. 'When I met Prime Minister Rao recently, he did not even ask me about that,' he added.

Journalist: *Will Prabhakaran be sent to India if captured?*

President: India has not asked.

Journalist: *Will there be further relaxations of the embargo?*

President: Yes, embargo will be lifted on some more items.

The President when asked on what the government delegation and the LTTE would have talks next time (Jan. 14) said that they will continue talks on the same subjects that were discussed last time, such as reconstruction rehabilitation etc. She said that the same delegation that went last week may also go next time as well.

The President also said that the press could not be informed of what was being discussed at every point.

Journalist: *Where is transparency then?*

President (laughingly): It doesn't mean that one runs along road naked.

Minister Ratwatte said that the media personel could not be taken to Jaffna to observe the negotiations as there was no time for the government to make arrangements as final decisions to have talks had been made about 2.00 p.m. on Monday, the second round of talks took place on Tuesday.

Minister Ratwatte when asked to explain how the cessation of hostilities will be operative said there would be six hundred metres between permanent camps of the government troops and the LTTE with both parties being allowed to move out of their camps up to hundred metres from both sides. The four hundred metres in the middle will be no man's area. If violations in the truce occur, the Minister, said, they could be brought to the notice of field commander appointed by the government and the LTTE and later to the notice of the six committees.

Journalist: *Has the UNP backed the agreement of a truce?*

President: It has already been contacted and all parties will be consulted when peace talks begin.

Journalist: *Now that the Government too has okayed foreign mediation in the form of being involved in the committees monitoring the cessation of hostilities, will that in the end lead to foreign intervention.*

President: In the recent history there has been foreign intervention without permission from the sitting government. There will also be 'internationalisation of the conflict' as one of you said earlier.

Journalist: *Do you have the backing of the armed forces?*

President: Laughingly pointing to service commander and the Defence Secretary. They are there you can ask them.

Defence Minister General Hamilton Wanasinghe: Yes? We all want peace. The earlier we achieve it the better it would be for all of us.

Brigadiar Siri Peiris: The LTTE can come out without weapons to collect food etc.

Journalist: *Will they be allowed to enter the capital also?*

President: They are already there – even with weapons. Yes they can come but without arms.

Journalist: *Then which road would be opened up, Elephant Pass or Pooneryn?*

Minister Ratwatte: That would be discussed on Jan. 14.

Journalist: *When will you discuss a political solution.*

The President said that the government had asked the LTTE about this and there was no fixed date.

Journalist: *What are the conditions put forward by the LTTE for discussing a political solution?*

Presidential Secretary Balapatebendi: The LTTE's position is that the Government has not been able to satisfy people in Jaffna. They (the LTTE) want to know how much of reconstruction and rehabilitation the government will undertake before peace talks.

Minister Ratwatte: There have been some delays in the process following the assassination of Mr. Gamini Dissanayake. They don't understand this.

Journalist: *Are they kids?*

President: They prefer not to understand.

President said that it was the duty of the Government to reconstruct and rehabilitate the north and east whether there were talks or not and if the LTTE co-operates these programmes could be implemented soon. She said that the Government had planned to allocate 39 billion rupees in this regard.

Journalist: *You are on record as having said that the devolution package the Government has in mind is based on Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact. . . .?*

The President said that the solution was not based on that Pact but there had to be extensive devolution as suggested by the Pact.

Journalist: *Isn't it Federalism?*

President: The Pact doesn't say about federalism. It refers to regionalism.

Minister G. L. Peris said that it was not nomenclature that mattered but devolution. He said the US and Indian Constitution though federal in character did not even mention the term federalism.

Journalist: *The LTTE claims that it is the sole representative of the Tamil community. Do you accept that?*

President: We have made our position very clear to them. We consider them the major representatives of the people of the north.

Journalist: *Will a roadway be opened up for the Pope's visit?*

President: Bishops of the north have made a request. And we have tried to expedite the process. But the LTTE doesn't seem to be agreeable.

Minister Ratwatte: We have made alternative arrangements to enable people of the north to come to Colombo.

Journalist: *Why don't you have talks in Colombo?*

The President said that once the talks on a political solution begin the LTTE will be invited to come to Colombo as well.

Response by Other Tamil Parties

Tamil political leaders expressed hope about prospects for peace following the cessation of hostilities agreed upon between the Government and the LTTE, but also urged caution in relying on the LTTE to fulfil its side of the deal.

Tamil United Liberation Front President M. Sivasithamparam:

We are very happy and welcome the decision. We hope this will lead to a permanent ceasefire and a

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Peace Process and 'Market Friendly' Policies

Govt's Policy Statement by President

The following are excerpted highlights of the Sri Lankan Government's policy statement made by the President Chandrika Kumaratunga on the occasion of the opening session of the Parliament on 6 January:

The year 1994 has been a momentous one for us in Sri Lanka. The people of our land have demonstrated remarkable dignity and wisdom through well nigh two decades of a corrupt, oppressive and destructive regime. They lived through the most horrendous suppression of fundamental human rights, a State structure which was corrupt and rotten to its very core, which frittered away our national assets with gay abandon.

They put up with a so-called economic development with no national objectives. The only objective was the pillage and plunder of the nation's wealth by those at the helm of power and their favourites. This successfully enriched the privileged few and impoverished everyone else to such an extent that a majority of the population earned a real income less than they did in 1977.

The people suffered patiently for seventeen long and arduous years. The year 1994 brought three historic moments which saw the manifestation of a magnificent outburst of a people's free protest against the political terror, the corruption, the callousness and the inefficiency of the previous regime. They expressed their unrelenting courage and desire for change – a positive and meaningful change for all sections and communities of the Sri Lankan polity; a change from oppression and terror to a truly operative democracy, in which the rule of law was firmly entrenched; a change that would bring about sustainable economic development, increase production and employment, decrease inflation, and provide social justice and equity.

The people also pronounced loud and clear their deep and genuine yearning for Peace and an end to the war in the North-East of our country.

The political structures which were evolved in the last seventeen years for governing through intimidation and violence, do not leave room for the checks and balances exercised by the expression of the people's will. It would be easy to slip back into authoritarian rule, employing the overriding constitutional powers accorded to the President. But our style of governance is radically different. Our resolute commitment to democracy and good governance gives us the courage to resolve democratically the enormous problems facing the country.

To that end my government has already adopted several measures in the short period of 4½ months.

● The first task undertaken by my Government was the drastic scaling down of Emergency Powers which had been flagrantly and unrepentantly abused to the detriment of core values of freedom.

Within ten days of assumption of office, my Government took action to rescind the Emergency in all parts of the Republic other than those where there was a need for its continuation because of the prevailing military situation. In doing so, my Government restored to Parliament its legitimate authority to deal with a wide gamut of subjects which should fall properly within the purview of Parliament, rather than the extraordinary law making powers of the President under Emergency rule. Consequently, my government has been able to re-establish in the country, an atmosphere in which the expression of opinion and enjoyment of freedom are possible without constraint of inhibition.

● Gone are the dreaded days when journalists, professionals, leaders of trade unions and even schoolboys and undergraduates were taken from their homes at dead of night, only to be found later on burning tyres or in equally gruesome settings.

● Honourable Members of Parliament, you will recall that the first piece of legislation presented by my Government to this august assembly had, as its aim, the restoration of integrity and honour to the public life of our motherland. This legislation, which Parliament enacted unanimously, provided for the establishment of a Permanent Commission on Bribery and Corruption. The most striking feature of this legislation is the robust and complete independence of the Commission from political interference.

● My Government has taken early action to prevent the cynical abuse of Parliamentary privilege which had constituted so conspicuous a hallmark of the previous administration. The Speaker of Parliament of that regime withheld his approval for commencement of inquiries into allegations of bribery made against prominent Ministers. We took rapid action to dispense with the requirement stipulated by the Bribery Act, with regard to the Speaker's concurrence in embarking upon the investigation of bribery charges proffered against Members of Parliament.

Corrupt politicians can no longer have recourse to membership of the country's supreme legislature as a shield against investigation of, and punishment for, gross abuse of public power. In this way we have espoused and upheld, the value of transparency and accountability in the public life of the Republic.

● An important matter which calls for mention is the far-reaching exercise in Constitutional Reform which is already well under way. Our people have given my Government an overwhelming mandate to do away with the present Constitution and to replace it with a new Constitutional regime far better suited to the fulfilment of the nation's aspirations.

● My Government is committed to the abolition of the Executive Presidency as the centrepiece of Sri Lanka's constitutional system and its replacement by a Parliamentary and Cabinet system of government. Parliament, consisting of the elected representatives of the people, will be the principal instrument of State power. However, Parliament itself is in need of significant reform.

The package of Constitutional proposals of my Government will pay particular attention to strengthening the fundamental rights enshrined in the Constitution, fortifying the independence of the public service and invigorating a variety of consultative mechanisms.

The Parliamentary Select Committee on Constitutional Reform will be the forum in which consultations and consensus will take place among political parties with regard to all aspects of Constitutional Reform. My Government hopes that this process will reach fruition in a spirit of amity and goodwill by the 15th of July this year.

A primary condition for the solution of national problems is the existence of robust and healthy public opinion. This presupposes a virile and independent mass media. The media in our country have operated for too long in an atmosphere pervaded by inhibitions and pressures. We wish to bring into existence conditions which will enable the media to operate without hindrance. A thorough overhaul of the law and practice relating to mass

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media has already been embarked upon.

Several Committees have already been appointed to consider matters pertaining to the pattern of ownership of the Associated Newspapers of Ceylon Ltd, and the future of the print and electronic media in Sri Lanka generally.

● The other crucial matter which calls for mention relates to the ethnic problem and the war in progress in the North-East region of the Republic.

My Government was elected on a major platform of initiatives directed towards the achievement of peace. The results of successive elections during the last year leave no room for doubt as to the country's deep and genuine desire for the advent of peace. The cost of the war in terms of loss of precious lives and resources is incalculable.

The scale of our victory at the Presidential election, against the backdrop of an undisguised appeal to chauvinistic emotions by the United National Party, testifies to the conviction and wisdom of our people in their desire for peace. It is remarkable that, for the first time in independent Sri Lanka, all sections of our people throughout, the length and breadth of our land, have expressed their desire in one firm and clear voice.

● The Official Languages Commission has been reconstituted and empowered to give full effect to the constitutional provision with regard to status and use of Sinhala and Tamil as official languages and English as a link language. The Government will also provide all facilities to ensure that every person in Sri Lanka is able to transact business with the State in the official language of his choice.

● It is in this spirit that we undertook the Peace process within days of taking over the government. In this regard we set in motion some carefully structured negotiations with the LTTE.

I am happy to announce to this House today that we have successfully negotiated with the LTTE a cessation of hostilities due to commence from the 8th of January – two days from now, as we commemorate the 96th birth anniversary of my father, who is the founder of the political party to which I belong. We hope that this cessation of hostilities would usher in a new era of peace, justice, and equality, enlightened by the humane values of brotherhood and harmony amongst all communities.

I must reiterate here that our Government sees this cessation of hostilities as a prelude to Peace talks which would address the substantive issues underlying the armed conflict and the ethnic problems. We shall shortly present to the LTTE, a package of proposals with regard to the devolution of power. This will form the basis for a negotiated political settlement.

I wish to emphasis, however, that we desire not peace at any cost but peace with honour. The dignity and self-esteem of all parties will be buttressed by the proposed solutions; which will be compatible with the aspirations of all ethnic and cultural groups, while the interests of the majority community will be safeguarded. I am greatly encouraged and strengthened by the knowledge that my Government has the goodwill of all Sri Lankans – Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim peoples alike – in blazing this trail in quest of the cherished goal of peace.

● The first economic policy statement of the Government of Sri Lanka was made on the 13th of September 1994 and has been subsequently tabled before Parliament. While reaffirming the policies announced in that statement, we seek now to carry forward their implementation. Since September, the Government has made progress in establishing a stable macro-economic and financial framework. This is the essential pre-requisite for 'market-friendly' policies where the private sector becomes the principal engine of growth. This is also conducive to the reduction of inflation, the pursuit of rapid economic growth, the creation of productive employment opportunities, and the equitable distribution of the fruits of development. The Government's development strategy in pursuance of these objectives comprises eight mutually reinforcing elements.

● First, the Government reiterates its firm intention to set its own financial house in order by containing the fiscal deficit at a tolerable level without resorting to inflationary borrowing from the Central Bank.

● Second, in order to reach the medium term goal already set for reducing the fiscal deficit to a level of 3 to 4 percent of GDP well before the year 2000, the Government is committed to reduce the deficit to no more than 6.5 percent of GDP in 1996, and 5 percent of GDP in 1997. This will mean that by borrowing less, the Government will release substantial national savings to the private sector. This in turn will reduce interest rates, encourage investment and moderate inflation. High interest rates are a major impediment to rapid private sector growth.

● Third, our approach to reducing the fiscal deficit for 1995 rules out tax measures inimical to private sector expansion. There will be no increase in taxation on corporate and personal incomes, no taxation on wealth or on capital gains, and no new stamp duties on share transactions. Detailed revenue measures will be announced in the budget.

● Fourth, the fiscal deficit will be reduced primarily by curtailing expenditure. The Government has taken steps to eliminate wasteful expenditure, starting at the top. The use of luxury vehicles has been abandoned by Ministers, and the number of vehicles available for official use has been curtailed. The assault on corruption has already started to make a difference to Government expenditures. Capital expenditure of the Government will be confined to core activities which only the public sector can discharge. These are primarily in the areas of education, health, vocational training, environmental protection and rural infrastructure.

● Fifth, only the public sector can provide a comprehensive social 'safety net'. This embodied in the Government's Samurdhi Programme, which will consolidate and target existing welfare and poverty alleviation programmes to reach those in genuine need. This programme will provide the income transfers needed to lift those in poverty to minimum levels of living, while simultaneously mobilising their energies to generate viable livelihoods.

● Sixth, the burden of financing other required investments, in particular those in public utilities and infrastructure development, will fall principally on the private sector. Most new investment in power generation, for example, will in future be developed by the private sector under Build, Own and Operate/Build, Operate and Transfer (BOO/BOT) arrangements as is the case today in most rapidly industrializing countries.

● Seventh, the Government will embark upon a major programme of selective and carefully planned privatization of public sector enterprises in 1995. This will include major ventures in the services sector especially in aviation, in transport, and in insurance. Divestiture of some industrial and trading activities such as sugar, paper, fertilizer and milk will be completed shortly. Large Government shares in companies will be disposed of in the market. Also, the Government will enter into long term management leases in the plantation sector. The Government will retain part ownership of the ventures in order to

ensure that the interest of the nation and employees are safeguarded, while guaranteeing conditions of good management and profitability to the private sector bodies which take over the ventures. In all cases there will be preferential allocation of stock in privatised companies to their employees, a concept we will extend in varying degrees to all public service employees and pensioners.

● Eighth it is the convergence of these various strands of policy that will enable Sri Lanka to realize its vision of becoming the principal regional financial services and transhipment centre.

There is still time for Sri Lanka to attract the major players in the world's financial arena to Colombo. This requires the provision of an efficient and competitive telecommunication service capable of keeping pace with rapid technological changes occurring in the world outside. As regards ports, the substantial volume of transhipment cargo which now bypasses Colombo could be attracted if adequate port development takes place. Major international companies have already expressed interest in investing in port development.

These strategies have the broad support of the IMF and the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, and the donor community with whom extensive discussions have recently been carried out.

The government will thus re-establish the conditions that will enable enhanced support for Sri Lanka. Once peace is established even stronger support could be mobilised for reconstruction and rehabilitation of damaged areas.

The successful implementation of this strategy requires an overall development perspective and supporting sectoral policies. Accordingly, the sections that follow will elaborate first, the future growth perspective including the scale of rapid private sector growth that will need to be unleashed and second, the key supporting sectoral policies in the areas of industry, trade, agriculture, fisheries, infrastructure, human resource development (education and health), the Government's social safety net – the Samurdhi Programme.

● In order to eradicate poverty and unemployment Sri Lanka's economy needs to grow at a much faster pace than in the past. We stand committed to accelerating economic growth to 8% annually, and to work unremittingly towards sustaining it. This will require a substantial increase in investment. The conflict in the North and East absorbs a quarter of our national savings; the indirect costs are much higher. While peace in the North and East is expected to eventually free about 2% of GDP after cessation of hostilities (the 'peace dividend') and add to public savings, the main burden of investment will fall on the shoulder of the private sector. While public investment could be maintained at its present level, private investment should increase to about 25% of GDP. We believe this can be achieved. But for it to materialize, our economic policies and economic management performance have to be coherent and predictable. We will do whatever is necessary to maintain a healthy investment climate.

● Crucial to this growth perspective, is the role assigned to foreign investment which would contribute at least a fifth of total private investment by year 2000. This will encompass both infrastructure and production. The fundamental obstacle to increased foreign investment is Sri Lanka's costly and prolonged ethnic conflict. The Government's solution to this problem is to build on the pact entered into by the late Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike with the Tamil community – the 'Bandaranaike-Chelvanayagam Pact' – which was based on their commitment to a united Sri Lanka with maximum devolution of power to the Tamil people.

Every effort will be made to attract appropriate foreign investment, in particular to target the world's leading companies and fund managers to invest in Sri Lanka. This is essential to expand the industrial and financial sectors and to gain continuing access to advanced technologies and export markets. The Government reaffirms its commitment made in the Economic Policy Statement last year that there will be no adverse change in labour policy relating to foreign investment. The Government respects the rights of workers to collectively negotiate with employers and conciliation mechanisms have been established for this purpose. We believe that productivity improvements must be rewarded with higher wages. However, illegal and irresponsible acts by small groups which sabotage the national strategy for economic growth will not be tolerated. The Government emphasizes that those in employment must respect the rights of the unemployed to get jobs; continuing, indeed increased, foreign investment is crucial to create those additional jobs.

● The government envisages the following programme of action in respect of industry:

☆ Our industrial policy is based on the experience of the high performing economies of Asia. The government will foster environmentally friendly and sustainable industrial growth through the establishment of macroeconomic stability which would lead to lower inflation and interest rates. This, together with a more open trade regime and flexible exchange rates, will lead to a dynamic, internationally competitive, export oriented, diversified industrial sector which will become increasingly more technologically sophisticated. While it is desirable to attract high-technology industries which are non-polluting, there is still room for Sri Lanka to develop similarly non-polluting labour intensive industries in areas other than garments. Foreign investment will make a vital contribution to this process by providing capital and continuing access to technologies and export markets.

*The government will provide an open and transparent legal framework and a market-friendly investment climate to the private sector. Government interventions will be confined to areas where markets clearly fail. There will be and to ad-hoc policy making. To ensure that sectoral policies in manufacturing, industry and services are properly developed and co-ordinated a National Development Council with representatives from the state, private sector, professional and trade unions will be established.

* Protecting inefficient industries will not assist rapid and sustainable industrialization and social equity; such policies have been rejected by the dynamic economies of Asia including China and Vietnam. The efficiency of the industrial sector would continue to be improved through the government's program of trade liberalisation, and the present multi-band tariff system will be compressed in a phased manner to introduce a uniform import tariff of no more than 15% by 1998.

* The Present system of investment incentives is full of anomalies, discriminatory and arbitrary surcharges, exemptions, and waivers. The government will make appropriate changes and move towards a simpler, transparent system of incentives which will eliminate the room for corruption and inefficiency, as part of its ongoing program of trade liberalisation. The simplification already made of eliminating tax holidays and replacing them with a 15% tax on export profits for a twenty year period will be continued.

* The government will assist the establishment of efficient small and

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medium scale industries which can be a vehicle for broad based industrialization and employment growth. Such assistance will be provided in a manner which does not result in a return to previous protectionist policies which wasted public funds and burdened consumers with low quality goods and high prices. The Government is considering a mechanism such as an equity fund or a loan guarantee fund to assist small and medium entrepreneurs who have limited resources of their own and lack the collateral to borrow from commercial banks. This is expected to help establish 20,000 small and medium industries with an employment potential of 250,000 over a five year period, equal to the employment generated by the entire textile sector. Small and medium scale industries will be strengthened by technology transfers through training and linkages with large scale and modern industrial enterprises.

* Despite its high levels of literacy, the Sri Lankan work force lacks the requisite skills that are essential for industrial upgrading and diversification. The numerous state run skill-development programmes and the general education system are essentially supply driven and therefore have a poor record of providing industry-relevant skills. The vocational training system will be extensively restructured so as to be demand driven, in co-operation with the private sector who will be the eventual employers. A Skills Development Fund will be inaugurated to establish an effective system of skills training.

* Similarly, with the active participation of the private sector, there will be extensive restructuring of the Government's industrial research and development institutes to ensure that they would be geared to meet the technological needs of industries, and to assist them to attain the price, quality, and delivery standards required in international markets.

* The promotion of agro-based industry and the manufacture of finished agricultural products would be given priority.

* The target of the Samurdhi Movement will be the 30 to 35% of the population (1,000,000 to 1,200,000 families) at the bottom of the income distribution scale, of which 700,000 to 850,000 live below the poverty line. Their income is proposed to be topped up to an adequate level on an island-wide basis. The details of the programme will be announced in the budget. In order to develop a thrift culture, the recipients would be encouraged to save some part of their allowance.

The poorest households are expected to divide by choice into pure savers and groups of potential borrowers/ entrepreneurs. For the savers the savings will accumulate in a personal savings bank account with interest. The principal sum will become available at the end of five years or whenever a poor household is able to generate an income of Rs. 2000 per month (including other transfers) for an uninterrupted period of 6 months.

Potential entrepreneurs will be organized in voluntary groups with their savings accumulating in each group's bank account. Groups will save an additional amount determined by the groups themselves. In a typical Grama Niladari (GN) division of 200 families where the target group of the poorest, made up of several voluntary groups, would comprise 45 families, as much as Rs. 100,000 could be accumulated in a very short period of time if all were investors. When the savings pool in each GN division reaches Rs. 60,000, the voluntary groups within it are expected to combine to form a Samurdhi Society which can extend loans to participating families. Since it is vital to also develop a repayment culture, the first loans to any individual in the group will be funded exclusively with the voluntary savings of the group, with the creditors therefore being the other group members. Of necessity these loans will be small (at most a couple hundred rupees), basically to cover emergency needs.

Samurdhi Societies are expected to join any of the existing grassroots savings and loans institutions catering to the needs of the poor, including NGOs with national coverage such as Sanasa and Sarvodaya. This can also include other smaller such institutions which may have more limited area coverage. In areas where NGOs have no presence, Samurdhi Societies will join the established banking institutions such as the People's Bank. On transfer of any Samurdhi Society's savings to one such institution of their choice, the group can receive loans from these institutions, initially drawing on the group's savings but subsequently drawing also on other sources of funds. In the case of JTF partner organisations these additional resources can come from the current World Bank and other donor funded poverty alleviation credits. The JTF will now become the National Development Trust Fund (NDTF). All participating NGOs will be encouraged to seek partner organization status under this Fund. Lending under the Samurdhi Programme will follow the established lending practices of these partner organisations.

Economically, we are committed to a free market economy that would generate sustainable economic and human development. While promoting rapid economic growth and employment, it would distribute its benefits equitably. The major vehicle of growth will be private enterprise. The poor will be accorded special protection, until they evolve viable livelihoods. Ours is a strategy which harnesses the market for rapid economic development and to social purpose.

Mahanayake's Protest Over Pope's Book

The Maha Nayake Theros of the Malwatte, Asgiriya Chapters of the Siyam Nikaya and the Amparapura, Ramanna Nikayas have made a strong protest against the comments made about Buddhism by Pope John Paul II in his book 'Crossing The Threshhold Of Hope' which they alleged to be mischievous, misleading and maliciously misinterpreted.

The Mahanayake Theros in a joint statement have expressed their profound dismay at the contents of the publication while pointing out that many non-Sri Lankans across the globe who have a respectable knowledge of Buddhism too have challenged the Pope's learned theorisation. The first such challenge coming from English readers of the British Press. The British Press has categorically stated that 'The Pope's comments have generated disgust and disappointment.'

In a signed document, the Maha Nayaka Theros have stated:

'For more than six months now it was known in this country that his Holiness the Pope was going to visit Sri Lanka during one of his global tours. Then came the news of the beatification of Rev. Fr. Vaz. All this

news was well received in this country without a murmur. The Sri Lankans who are nearly 70% Buddhist, customarily viewed them as normal peaceful anecdotes in the history of any tolerant country. Some of us have already sent up words of welcome to His Holiness for publication in a souvenir, at the request of the Catholic hierarchy of this country. This we did in the fervent hope that through such mutual respect of different religious creeds in the world, we could unitedly work towards a common goal of peace everywhere. But we are totally disillusioned and disappointed on the discovery of treacherous acts undercutting almost at our doorstep.

'On 21.11.94 and 27.11.94 two local newspapers, *The Sunday Island* and *The Sunday Times* respectively, published extensive news items relating to the recently published book of His Holiness John Paul II entitled *Crossing The Threshhold of Hope*, together with the frank reviews and criticisms provoked by it such as what gets up the Pope's nose from *The Independent Weekend*. As the British Press reported, the Pope's comments have generated disgust and disappointment.

'The complete Papal document has now reached our hands. Its contents are now an open secret. Its few pages on Buddhism appeared in full in the *Sunday Times* of 27.11.94 we are completely in agreement with the chastisment pertaining to these mischievous, if not malicious misrepresentations made therein, may be through blissful ignorance or wishful thinking. We know that many non-Sri Lankan scholars in the world, both Buddhist and non-Buddhist, have a respectably profound knowledge of Buddhism. This is why the challenge to the Pope's apparently learned theorization came first from the English readers of the British press.

'To His Holiness, the Papal See may be an extensive area, but the world of humans on earth, he must remember, is a more extensive area. There are many who live outside it. He must not attempt to ride rough shod over the rest. As he has admittedly done it, we wish to inform the Roman Catholic Church that we have decided not to participate in any event connected with his visit. The state in acting the host, to whatever extent on this occasion, must take serious note of this insult hurled at the vast majority of the population of this country.

'Sri Lanka must also remember that the entire Buddhist world is seriously watching its line of action on this occasion of unprovoked and uncalled-for insult. Through the Catholic Church which is primarily sponsoring this visit, the Pope must express his sincere regret to the community whose religious susceptibilities he has outrageously injured.

'We address this communication on behalf of the Buddhist Sangha and the laity of Sri Lanka, with a view to fostering good will among the different religious communities who have lived here considerably peacefully so far.

The Murder of DPLF Vice President

The killing of Vice President of the Democratic People's Liberation Front (DPLF) K. Kandasamy has caused much concern in political circles. Mystery still surrounds the killing as there are two versions to the incident. The official version of the PLOTE whose political wing is the DPLF is that Kandasamy was felled by the LTTE as his views ran counter to theirs.

But there are others among whom are leaders of former Tamil militant groups who say that the killing of Kandasamy was an inside job. For the political wing of the movement had now become dominant and this is not to the liking of the military wing which feels that because of the movement's parliamentary leanings, they, the fighters have been sidelined. The manner of the killing they point out, also suggests that it had been carried out with the knowledge of the PLOTE. For, those who masterminded the killing were certain that a single gunman could do the job. And the first thing the killer did after entering Kandasamy's residence where he was killed was to remove the main fuse plunging the entire house in darkness. And the solitary security guard deployed by the PLOTE to protect him had also vanished at the time of the killing.

There is no evidence that Kandasamy had any more meetings with the LTTE.

The killer knew Kandasamy watched 'Ramayanaya' on Saturdays and he knew where he would be seated while watching television.

So about 8.00pm the killer reached Kandasamy's residence. The guard was not there and this facilitated his access. He walked right up to the main fuse and pulled it out. It was dark and Kandasamy heard footsteps and asked', Who is it? The killer wasted no time. He pumped several bullets into Kandasamy. His wife and daughter rushed to the sitting room in dark shouting. The killer took no chances. He lobbed a grenade and fled. Kandasamy was killed while wife and daughter were injured.

Following this killing fear looms large in political circles as thousands of people are scheduled to flock to Colombo from the north for the Pope's visit. The question former Tamil militant groups raise is, 'What guarantee does the government have that the LTTE will not make use of this opportunity to send their cadres to Colombo either for immediate deployment or for some kind of orientation'.

Set against this kind of backdrop the killing gives rise to doubts. But associations Kandasamy had with the LTTE also suggest that he may have been killed by them: about two months ago Kandasamy received a letter from the LTTE delivered by an LTTE boy in Colombo. The letter invited him to meet at a certain place in the city with four LTTE activists.

At this meeting Kandasamy was requested by the LTTE to join the LTTE and to contribute to their cause Eelam. Kandasamy whose politics differed from that of the LTTE turned down the request. But the LTTE wanted to pursue the matter and had further meetings with him at different venues. Kandasamy for some reason kept these meetings a closely guarded secret until two weeks ago. Two weeks ago he officially informed the PLOTE that the LTTE was soliciting his support but he had turned down their request several times. The party warned him against having such associations with the LTTE. For the party knew it was part of the LTTE's strategy to make friends with a target before he/she is killed. This, the party told him, gave the LTTE easy access to their target and saved time and resources on a masterplan.

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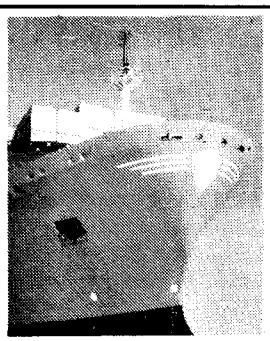

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The Case For A Federal Sri Lanka – I

by Rohan Edrisinha and Paikiasothy Saravanamuttu
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Introduction

In presenting the case for a federal Sri Lanka, this paper begins with a statement of the national crisis. It argues that underpinning the crisis are the twin questions of nation and state, which in turn focus attention on the issues of democracy, conflict resolution and good governance. We conclude by arguing that although federalism is no panacea, it provides the best framework for an overarching national unity with durable mechanisms for genuine, democratic powersharing. Indeed, we add that federalism is gaining more adherents in Sri Lanka.

The Crisis

The manifestation of violent ethnic conflict in the prolonged and tortuous nation and state building process, has drawn attention to Sri Lanka as a country that has proceeded from enviable political stability and parliamentary democracy to seemingly intractable crisis. Consensual elite politics have progressively given way to populism and chauvinism in the face of rising and unfulfilled political and socio-economic expectations. At issue is the composition of the nation and the structure of the state, suggesting that the crisis is about political legitimacy and the concentration of power.

This is a question that is pertinent to the politics of both the majority Sinhalese community and the Tamils, the largest minority community. In both cases, the espousal of ethnic identity is in itself an unsatisfactory, though convenient vehicle for the fulfilment of basic demands for political power and access to socio-economic advancement. Underlying the issue of ethnicity therefore, is the crucial question of power distribution which ethnicity itself can forcefully highlight, but cannot satisfactorily resolve. Indeed, inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relations are conditioned by this, either by acts of commission or omission, as has been illustrated by recent developments.

The question of devising a satisfactory distribution of power consonant with the centralizing and unitary orientation of the political culture, finds its intellectual antecedents in the colonial legacy of the nation-state as the principal form of collective political organization and the reality at independence of a **state-nation**, rather than a nation-state. In contrast to the European experience upon which the idea was founded, nation and state have not developed symbiotically in Sri Lanka. State has preceded nation and taken upon itself the task of creating a nation in fulfilment of the established norm. The evolution of democracy and powersharing must, therefore, be seen in the context of this nation and state building process.

Political Evolution: The Parliamentary Phase

Tensions between the Sinhalese and the Tamils regarding their respective positions in an independent Sri Lanka were discernible in 1931 when the island was granted universal adult franchise. The enduring Tamil fear was that their positions of relative advantage in the bureaucracy, gained through educational attainments and colonial policy would be irretrievably jeopardised, by majority Sinhalese rule. The Sinhalese, in turn, have been eager to redress this imbalance to reflect their majority status and claim for cultural distinctiveness to Sri Lanka, in contrast with Tamil links to south India.

In the prelude to independence in 1948, Tamil anxieties were expressed in their demands for parliamentary constituencies to be drawn up on a communal basis and for there to be a 50/50 even split between majority and minority representation in the legislature. Even though communal representation was not granted, population distribution ensured that the 'first-past-the-post' Westminster style electoral system would lead to political polarization along ethnic lines, with the majority Sinhalese parties dominating in the south and their Tamil minority counterparts doing likewise in the north.

Tamil fears of marginalization at the centre were sustained by the certainty of Sinhalese preponderance in government. Government sponsored colonization schemes perceived by Tamils to be aimed at altering the demographic balance and language and education policy, cumulatively reinforced fears and sense of grievance.

Tamil leaders, nevertheless, committed themselves along with the Sinhalese elite, to the parliamentary process. The Tamil strategy was to exchange support and participation in government for measures safeguarding minority interests and it attested to the strength of the inter-communal elite consensus on parliamentary democracy and the constitutional ethos of the island's independence movement. However, political accommodation though subscribed to in principle, was not fully reflected in practice, by government. Not solely based on ethnic considerations, but rather, more reflecting the conservative bias of the establishment and its desire to contain leftist politics, the disenfranchisement of the plantation workers of Indian origin which led to the creation of the Federal Party among the Tamils, was an early indication of this.

Despite setbacks, however, this consensus survived until it was finally eroded in the 1970s.

The acceptance of political accommodation and parliamentary democracy as the framework for managing societal tensions, was undermined by intra-elite competition. This exploited ethnic populism for partisan advantage. Explicit identification with ethnic populism came to be regarded as crucial to electoral success, thus legitimizing the older and more divisive bases of identity, as the ultimate sources of political power. This exposed the inability of the elite consensus to fuse the older forms of identity into a durable and overarching national identity.

Herein lies the significance of the 1956 election, which was won in the south by the centre-left coalition of Sinhalese populist forces headed by Mr. S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike, founder of the Sri Lanka Freedom Party (SLFP) and by the Federal Party in the north.

Once in government, Bandaranaike fulfilled his election pledge to

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make Sinhala the official language, striking at the heart of Tamil fears regarding education and employment. More damaging, his inability to control the Sinhalese Buddhist coalition that propelled him to power, forced him into positions that were further inimical to ethnic harmony. Consequently, his efforts in 1957 to ameliorate the impact of the official language policy on the Tamils, with special provisions for the use of the Tamil language and the devolution of power to regional councils, in a pact with the Federal Party leader Chelvanayakam, was obstructed by the innate chauvinism of the Sinhalese electorate and the political opportunism of the United National Party (UNP) opposition. Violent Sinhalese-Tamil riots, the first of their kind in independent Sri Lanka, ensued.

Throughout the next decade, the deterioration in ethnic relations was tempered by the residual vitality of the parliamentary consensus. The Tamil leadership continued the practice of parliamentary accommodation, even though the first government of Mrs. Bandaranaike (1960-64), vigorously implemented the official language policy and reneged on promises to reintroduce the devolution proposals envisaged in the Bandaranaike-Chelvanayakam Pact. With assurances on this score contained in a pact with the UNP, the Federal Party joined a UNP dominated national government in 1965. Whilst legislation for the use of Tamil was passed, that relating to the devolution of power was not and the Federal Party withdrew from government in mid 1969.

Therefore, seen from the perspective of nation and state building, the 1956 election was a milestone in Sri Lankan politics. In the south, it amounted to the triumph of ethnic identity, exemplified by the capture of the state by the majority community for the purpose of political consolidation and the control of economic power through nationalization; in the north it represented the beginnings of a serious challenge to the unitary status of that state.

The Politics of Authoritarianism

The pattern of political activity initiated in the 1970s, signalled the collapse of the parliamentary consensus and institutionalised the recourse to violence in the resolution of political conflict.

Disenchantment with the elite leadership among both the Sinhalese and Tamil youth, coalesced into the conviction that their grievances could only be met through armed insurgency against the established centre.

In the south, the basis for grievance was the demand for greater access to socio-economic and political power. Originally exemplified by the ultra-leftist 1971 Janatha Vimukthi Peramuna (JVP) insurgency, it was revitalised in 1987 as an extreme Sinhalese nationalist rebellion against the state, by Indian intervention to resolve the ethnic conflict. In the north, youth dissent was founded on frustration with the failure of the strategy of political accommodation to prevent discrimination, notably, the second Mrs. Bandaranaike government's university admissions policy. By the mid-1970s, the accruing bitterness had heightened militant ethnic consciousness and spawned numerous guerrilla groups, including the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE).

Established political parties, in turn, deepened their monopoly of state power at the expense of the parliamentary framework. This reinforced the trend towards violent opposition and heightened ethnic consciousness. Both the left-wing United Front government of Mrs. Bandaranaike (1970-77) and its right-wing successor, the regime of Mr. J.R. Jayewardene (1977-89), were guilty of this.

Both were swept into power with unprecedented majorities in the legislature which they used for partisan advantage. They both changed the constitution – the first in 1972 making Sri Lanka a republic in which the primacy of the majority language and religion, Sinhala and Buddhism respectively, were assured, and the second in 1978, replacing the parliamentary system with an executive presidency on the grounds that such a system was the best suited for accelerated economic development. Most ominously, the UNP introduced the dubious precedent of a referendum in December 1982 to postpone elections for a full 11 years, thereby compounding the unrepresentative character of the legislature and sealing it off from radical opinion.

The common strand in the establishment's response to what in the JVP's case was a threat to the character of the state and in the case of Tamil militancy a threat to its territorial composition, was the attempt to de-legitimise both challenges by defining them as essentially terrorist by nature. In the south, however, given an armed insurgency from within its own ethnic constituency, the government's sense of danger was more acute and consequently its response, more political. Sinhalese dominated governments, regardless of ideological orientation, defended the political establishment with brutal determination, whilst simultaneously moving to placate the radical elements within their ethnic group. This carrot and stick approach was adopted towards the JVP by Mrs. Bandaranaike in 1971 and by Jayewardene's UNP successor, Premadasa, in 1989.

Alternatively, when confronted with Tamil secession, the response was uncompromising and militarist; the search for a political solution was necessitated only by military stalemate, impending bankruptcy and external intervention in the Jayewardene era.

The corresponding response of the Tamil leadership in the 1970s was conditioned by the need to preserve political credibility in the new era of militancy. Interpreting the chauvinistic bias of its proceedings as the effective abandonment of minority rights by the United Front government, the Federal Party walked out of the Constituent Assembly in 1971 and closed ranks with other Tamil parties to form the Tamil United Front, a year later. In 1976, they adopted the Vaddukoddai resolution calling for a separate state of Tamil Eelam and transformed themselves into the Tamil United Liberation Front (TULF).

However, when the TULF won a popular mandate for the separatist platform in the 1977 general election, it returned to the legislature as the single largest party in opposition and its leader, Mr. A. Amirthalingam, accepted the official title of Leader of the Opposition. Nevertheless, the limited hope generated by this and the Jayewardene regime's promise of an all-party conference to address Tamil grievances, soon evaporated in the midst of violence and accusations of bad faith. The all-party conference was not convened and a district development council scheme was eventualy rejected as inadequate by the TULF. In addition, a host of other factors bedevilled ethnic harmony. These

included the malpractices of the ruling party and the destruction of the Public Library in the northern capital of Jaffna during the development council elections; the excesses of the Sri Lankan security forces, empowered with a draconian Prevention of Terrorism Act and terrorist action by Tamil militants. Inflammatory rhetoric from within the cabinet as well, ensured that the vicious cycle of ambush, atrocity and invective, destroyed any prospect of ethnic reconciliation.

Ethnic Conflict

The horrific events of July 1983 are well known. Most damning is the reported acquiescence and participation of sections of the security forces in the terror and allegations that elements within the ruling party were responsible for the organized carnage.

The government belatedly responded by effectively blaming the victims. In a move openly designed to placate Sinhalese chauvinism, it passed the Sixth Amendment to the constitution, which effectively outlawed the advocacy of secession. To counter adverse international publicity, it blamed ultra-leftist groups for the slaughter as a necessary part of their determined conspiracy to destroy democracy in Sri Lanka. Jayewardene who had lifted the original ban on the JVP, now proscribed them along with other radical left-wing parties. The cumulative impact of these measures was to conclude the parliamentary phase to nation building with the exclusion of the Tamil and anti-establishment parties from the legislature. This also enabled the government to project itself as the embattled champion of the democratic political establishment, against the forces of extremism and terror.

As full-scale ethnic conflict followed, the external dimensions of the conflict were highlighted. Given its domestic Tamilnadu constituency and the influx of refugees from Sri Lanka, India offered to mediate. However, a series of proposals failed to bridge the gulf between the two sides and Indian mediatory efforts were compromised by New Delhi's assistance to the Tamil militants. Ultimately, in 1987, it was Indian intervention in the form of the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord that produced a package identifying a measure of provincial devolution, as the basis for the resolution of minority grievance.

As is well known, the Accord and the introduction of the Indian Peace Keeping Forces (IPKF) to facilitate it, sparked off another round of vicious nation and state building conflict. India was pitted against the LTTE, who emerged as the principal Tamil militant group, and the Sri Lankan establishment took on the JVP, who posed as the standard bearers of true national liberation.

Via the Thirteenth Amendment, a system of island wide provincial councils was established in 1988 and Tamil, made an official language along with English as a 'link' language.

In the subsequent years, the provincial councils have functioned in the rest of the island, but not in the northeast, the area for which they were originally intended. Continued conflict between the LTTE and the IPKF, between the LTTE and the pro-Indian Eelam People's Revolutionary Liberation Front (EPRLF), which constituted the first Northeast Provincial council, and the tactical alliance between the Premadasa regime and the LTTE to evict the IPKF, combined to abort the devolutionary experiment in the northeast. By the time of the IPKF withdrawal in 1990, the JVP insurgency in the south had been crushed and in the absence of a continuing common strategic interest, by June, the government and the Tigers were at war once more. The government for its part, declared the war to be against Tiger terrorism and not, a war against the Tamil people.

As a consequence of his insecurities within the ruling UNP, President Premadasa was eager to construct a national unity centred on his anti-Indian and populist credentials. Also, given the electoral requirements of the executive presidential system, the crucial importance of the minority vote for his presidency, was reinforced. Indeed, from the All Party Conference (APC) convened at the outset of his presidency, to the variety of proposals that were floated within and outside the Mangala Moonesinghe Select Committee to find a resolution to the ethnic conflict, the imminence of a political package that went beyond the provisions of the Thirteenth Amendment to satisfy minority grievances, was skilfully cultivated.

It soon became apparent that the self-perceptions of political insecurity and electoral disaster, precluded bold initiatives from either the government or opposition on this score. It was also evident that the Premadasa favoured formula of consultation, consensus and compromise, could not break the stranglehold of ingrained prejudices to produce anything beyond a Sinhalese consensus on de-linking the northern and eastern provinces, that had been merged under the Accord and a Tamil insistence on greater devolution and the permanent merger of the two provinces. Accordingly, the initial promise too of the select committee was dissipated.

Post Premadasa Politics

The period from the assassination of President Premadasa to the People's Alliance (PA) victory at the August 1994 general election, was one in which the ethnic conflict was redefined as a terrorist war by the government of President Wijetunga. By his myopic and chauvinistic line on this conflict, inspired by a desire to break from the perceived Premadasa policy of being soft on this issue and on the LTTE especially, President Wijetunga fast undid the electoral coalition, President Premadasa had so assiduously put together for himself and the UNP. The PA leader Chandrika Kumaratunga, was thus able to present herself, with little challenge from the UNP, as the genuine peace candidate and as the Sinhalese national leader committed to peace with the protection of minority rights.

Her election, first as Prime Minister and then overwhelmingly a month ago as President, marks a significant shift in majority opinion about conflict resolution. That she has projected herself successfully as a truly national leader with an electoral base that spans both the majority and minority communities and stood firmly behind a continuation of the peace process, even in the aftermath of the Dissanayake assassination which is widely held to be another LTTE crime, attests to the force of the hope for change and peace amongst the electorate at large.

Most importantly, the ascendancy of President Kumaratunga has opened up the debate on conflict resolution and shifted the language of this debate, at least, from a discussion of devolution to one of powersharing. Consequently, there is a recognition by the governent, through the Select Committee process, that the questions of nation

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Decommunalising Public Institutions in Sri Lanka

by Dr. N. Shanmugaratnam

Of historic significance is the fact that today, after many decades of communalist politics, we find ourselves at the threshold of a new era facing the great challenge of reconstructing Lanka as a multiethnic democracy. There are many aspects to this challenge. The peace process initiated by the new government needs to be interpreted in a much broader sense than talks with the LTTE and the lifting of the economic embargo on the people of the North. No doubt, these are very important steps and they have indeed convinced the Tamil speaking people of the willingness of the government to find a political solution to the national question. An important aspect of the peace process and democratisation that does not seem to have caught the serious attention of the P.A. government is decommunalisation of public institutions. While the current popular political trend in our society is against communalism, the state and public institutions remain communalised due to the policies and practices of the past four decades. Putting an end to institutional communalism is a necessary condition for the building of a multiethnic Lankan society.

Communalisation of public institutions began in 1956 with the implementation of the Official Language Act. Subsequently, this was extended to recruitment of personnel to government departments and appointments to high offices. The armed forces and police are extreme cases in point. They do not reflect the multiethnic character of the Lankan society. Our universities have progressively lost their multiethnic character. Even though Tamil is now an official language, more often than not Tamil speaking persons are unable to exercise their right to transact business in their own language in government institutions in multiethnic areas like Colombo and Kandy. These institutions seem to be practising a 'Sinhala Only' policy. Many of them do not have officials proficient in Tamil, and very often they do not even have the forms and other basic documents in Tamil. It is not uncommon to find an official in a public institution in Colombo replying to you in Sinhala when you are talking to him in Tamil. In such a situation, a citizen who can not understand Sinhala feels helpless and, perhaps, intimidated by the bureaucracy as personified by the unhelpful official. Perhaps, the heads and other officials of these institutions could afford to be so negligent because such failure on their part to facilitate a citizen to exercise his or her language right goes unquestioned by higher authorities. I am here referring to government institutions like post offices, police stations, education department, kachcheries, offices of registrar of births and deaths, pension offices, immigration and emigration, municipal offices, etc. Even letters sent by government institutions to Tamils and Muslims living in the North and East and the upcountry are often in Sinhala only. It was reported in the Tamil daily Veerakesari of 19 November that the letters of appointment sent to newly recruited Tamil correspondents of the Sri Lanka Broadcasting Corporation were in Sinhala. They were also sent a letter asking them to attend a training programme and a questionnaire to be filled, all in Sinhala only again. There are numerous such instances of violation of a fundamental right by the very system which is supposed to enforce it.

These are manifestations of institutionalised communalism which has so consistently weakened the credibility and legitimacy of the Lankan state among the Tamil and Muslim peoples. Restoring popular legitimacy to the Lankan state among the minorities is a precondition for building a multiethnic democracy in this country. This is no easy task as it demands a genuine and systematic multi-pronged programme of decommunalisation at all levels of government and the state. It is not just a matter of creating a new consciousness and ethic among public officials and the citizenry at large, an undertaking that can not succeed without fundamental changes in the contents and forms of our formal education. Furthermore, the mass media and political and social movements in Lanka have major role to play in support of this process. Decommunialisation of public institutions involves the following as a minimum:

- Dismantling of the communalist ideological structures of the state;
- Elimination of all forms of overt and covert discrimination on ethnic grounds;
- Development of a work ethic based on values of pluralism, efficiency and accountability among public officials;
- Building awareness among the people of their language rights, and the confidence to assert these rights where they are stifled by public officials; and
- Active promotion of a Lankan consciousness and a corporate national identity overarching the ethno-communalism identities.

For a multi-ethnic democracy to flourish, the state while guaranteeing religious freedoms and protection against communalist violence to all citizens, should remain truly secular. Only a secular state can really be ethnically neutral and stand above communal divides as the legitimate arbiter of conflicts. Thus it is in the interest of all groups (whatever beliefs they subscribe to) to join forces in creating the secular state. A secular state in Lanka may sound like a distant dream to many, but it is the most realistic institutional device to ensure the formation and development of a harmonious multi-ethnic society and sustain it indefinitely. Secularisation of the state should enter our public debates on peace, democracy, and the development of a pluralist political culture. While we debate the immediate and longterm prospects of establishing a secular state, the present government may take some immediate concrete steps towards decommunalising public institutions.

A Task Force for Decommunalising Public Institutions

A Task Force with a clearly defined mandate to decommunalise the most essential public institutions within a time-frame of six months, and to evolve a longer term strategy to extend the exercise to all publc institutions, would seem to be a feasible approach. The mandate should include the following:

- Prioritisation of public institutions according to the magnitude

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CAMPAIGN FOR PEACE AND DEMOCRACY

Thousands Attend Peace Rally

Thousands of peace and human rights activists, representatives of over 40 non-party formations and non-governmental organizations, staged a mass peace rally on 9th December – the eve of International Human Rights Day.

The Peace March commenced from two points, the Galle Face Green and Campbell Park, linked-up at Hyde Park, and then wound its way to the Vihara Mahadevi Park. The procession was accompanied by street theatre artists who sang, danced and portrayed the horrors of war – and the joy of peace.

At the Vihara Mahadevi Park, the eager crowds were kept absorbed by speeches on various themes pertaining to Peace, Democracy and Human Rights. The speeches were interspersed by a variety of cultural programmes depicting the theme of the rally.

The Speakers included the key co-ordinator Manoranjan of the Free Media Movement and the key co-ordinator of the Peace Rally, Vasudeva Nanyakara, Sumanasiri Liyanage, Balakrishnan and Anita Fernando and Joe Seneviratne.

The Peace Rally ended with peace torches being lit and the formal adoption of two Appeals, one to the Government and the other to the LTTE.

AN APPEAL TO THE GOVT.

During the last decade and a half, the people of this country have experienced, a breakdown of democratic practice and peace between ethnic groups. Oppressed by these conditions and desiring change, the people – Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Burgher – have used their franchise in unprecedented numbers to install in power a government of the People's Alliance. This mandate casts on the government the responsibility of re-establishing both peace and democratic practice.

We appreciate the measures that have been taken so far by the government in this direction, but we believe that more needs to be done.

1. We call on the government to dispel all doubts about its intentions by firmly declaring its total commitment to the achievement of peace and that it will not permit its efforts to be thwarted or disturbed by any obstacles that may be placed in its path.

2. We also call on the government to present without delay the contours of the political solution that it is prepared to implement for the resolution of the ethnic conflict; this solution should take into consideration the genuine aspirations of the Tamil and Muslim peoples and affirm to all citizens the full enjoyment of their democratic rights.

3. In the meantime, while negotiations to end the war proceed, there are a number of other measures that the government can take to ease the situation and gain the greater confidence of the minorities:

i. the implementation throughout the country of the constitutional provisions regarding the use of Tamil as an official language;

ii. the reconsitution of national institutions such as the police, the armed forces, the state media and local government bodies so that they reflect the multi-ethnic nature of our society;

iii. the appointment of a Commission to look into the plight of those Sinhala, Tamil and Muslim people who have been affected by the colonization policies of successive governments, bearing in mind that these colonization policies have themselves served to exacerbate the ethnic conflict; the Commission should consult directly with those affected and also be empowered to make recommendations to resolve this question;

iv. investigations into the mass killings of unarmed civilians suspected to have been carried out by the state security forces in the course of military operations in the north-east and the punishment of perpetrators;

v. accession to the Optional Protocols to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Additional Protocol II of the Geneva Convention relating to internal conflicts and implementation of their provisions, as well as adhering to the norms of International Humanitarian Law.

vi. the extension of the period that has now been stipulated for the Commission that are investigating disappearances and similar violations to 1.1.79 so that disappearances in the north-east too are brought within the ambit of investigations.

4. People living in the areas affected by the conflict have suffered inordinate deprivations over the past years, facing scarcities of even essential requirements. Urgent measures as outlined below are needed to alleviate their living conditions:

i. embargoes on the transport of goods must be lifted; food, drugs and other essentials should be made available in sufficient quantities;

ii. relief and rehabilitation measures must be expanded to cover the needs of all displaced Tamil, Sinhala and Muslim persons as well as those whose livelihoods have been affected by the conflict;

iii. peace committees consisting of senior army personnel, state officials, representatives of human rights and other non-governmental and civic organizations must be set up in all areas of conflict so that violations of human rights can be monitored and prevented;

iv. difficulties that exist for the free movement of civilians and goods must be removed.

5. Arising from the existence and the continuation of the ethnic conflict, there has been a growing militarisation of our society. To restore normal civil life and to ensure to all people the possibility of a peaceful future, we propose that the following measures be considered:

i. the formulation of measures for the rehabilitation of members of the armed forces, homeguards and others, whose present livelihoods are dirctly or indirectly dependent on the conflict;

ii. the formulation of measures for the rehabilitation of Tamil youth who have been involved in the conflict;

iii. measures for the speedy rehabilitation of those persons and areas adversely affected by the conflict.

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6. Persons who have been detained for long periods under the PTA or the emergency regulations without being indicted or brought before the law must be released. The Prevention of Terrorism Act, which was meant to be a temporary measure must be repealed.

We, as citizens committed actively to peace, make these proposals to the government and pledge our support for all efforts to achieve peace with democracy. We also call upon all citizens of Sri Lanka to extend their maximum support to the peace process.

We attach to this document an appeal that we are also making to the LTTE to work towards peace with democracy.

AN APPEAL TO THE LTTE

During the course of this conflict, the LTTE has emerged as a principal party, with physical control over a large extent of the north.

Recent public statements by the LTTE that they are for a peaceful resolution of the conflict have been broadly welcomed by the people in the North. We call on the LTTE to take the following steps in order to confirm their commitment to peace and fulfil the aspirations of the people for peace:

i. the LTTE must make public their proposals for a democratic political structure that they will consider as appropriate for a peaceful solution;

ii. it must refrain from any action that will be harmful to the peace process;

iii. in order to alleviate the worst rigours of the war and to strengthen the move towards peace, the LTTE should:

a. release all prisoners, hostages, military and police personnel in its custody.

b. allow persons living in areas under its control the free expression of their views on the peace process and the right to free association on that basis.

c. permit state and other organizations freedom to re-establish educational, health, transport, media, power and other facilities.

We also call upon the LTTE to take the following measures to reduce the adverse effects of the conflict on the people:

i. not to place any obstacles in the distribution of food and other essentials meant for civilian use and to ensure their adequate distribution;

ii. to honour and implement the provisions of the Geneva Conventions on internal conflicts, and adhere to the norms of International Humanitarian Law.

iii. to permit the freedom of activity of national and international government and non-governmental agencies engaged in relief work in the north-east.

The LTTE must also recognize the fundamental rights of people living in their areas of control, including the freedoms of conscience, expression, association and movement and ensure a climate in which these rights can be enjoyed.

It must accept the right and permit independent organizations to investigate violations of human rights, including the mass killings of unarmed civilians suspected to have been carried out by the LTTE.

The imposition of death sentences and their implementation must be stopped.

Muslims who have been compelled to flee from their homes in the north-east must be permitted to return and their safety and security ensured.

The recruitment and use of minors for military purposes must cease. All minors presently active, militarily, must be returned to civilian life.

It must pledge the right of Muslims and Sinhalese to voluntarily reside in and pursue their livelihoods in the north-east after the resolution of the conflict.

We, as citizens committed actively to peace, make these proposals to the LTTE and pledge our support for all efforts to achieve peace with democracy.

We attach to this document an appeal that we are also making to the Government of Sri Lanka to work towards peace with democracy.

Signatories to the Appeal

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Lasting Peace in Sri Lanka: A Wishful Thinking or Reality?

by Dr. S. Narapalasingam

Preamble

The views expressed by the writer are personal to him. Although some may think that the past events that led to the ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka are unimportant to its settlement, the author feels strongly that there are hard lessons to be learnt which will help to arrive at a just solution through mutual recognition and understanding of the concerns and difficulties of the two sides. Indeed, any negotiated settlement of the conflict which has taken a heavy toll on human lives and other national assets requires a practical approach taking cognizance of the causes that have contributed to it. The intransigent positions and negative approaches that contributed to the failure of the previous talks must not be repeated, if both sides are committed to a peaceful resolution of the conflict. The author being an international development economist has also been mindful of the costs of the conflict to both sides and the potential benefits to the national economy, when harmonious conditions permit all available resources to be channelled for economic and social development of all regions and communities.

Hopeful signs for negotiated settlement

Hope of settling permanently the long standing ethnic conflict in Sri Lanka emerged with the victory of the People's Alliance (PA) under the new leader Mrs. Chandrikaa Bandaranaike Kumaratunga in the August 1994 general elections. Her massive victory in the succeeding Presidential Elections has reinforced this hope. A significant factor, that has contributed to the high hopes of many Sri Lankans from all communities, including the Tamils, for settling the ethnic conflict is her sincere conviction that the peaceful settlement is the best way to bring about unity essential to improve and sustain the welfare of all citizens in a multi-racial society. It is understood that both the diversity in races and the historic regional pattern of domicile of the different communities will be considered in finding a mutually acceptable solution. These significant features of the nation were ignored in the failed political systems so far tried in Sri Lanka.

Analysis of the August parliamentary election results reveals clearly that the majority ethnic group in Sri Lanka is fed up with communal politics and wants a peaceful settlement of the ethnic conflict. It is very noteworthy that the PA has been able to form the new Government without exploiting communalism. The decisive results of the subsequent Presidential election in all the districts of Sri Lanka confirm the island-wide support for her determination to settle peacefully the ethnic conflict in a just and fair manner.

Recent reports of independent journalists that appeared in the national press soon after the August general election indicate that the people in the North too expect to live harmoniously with the Sinhalese and Muslims under a fair and just political system. Unfortunately, many did not get the opportunity to exercise their right to vote. Nevertheless, their true feelings towards the new leader President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga were seen from the euophoria that prevailed after her victory. Their desire for peace was also evident from the way the members of the Government's negotiating team for the first round of talks were received in Jaffna.

Many Sinhalese having realized the worthless loss of lives and sufferings of the masses not only as a result of the endless war in the North-East but also due to the youth uprising in the South are eager for the return of peace and national unity.

It is laudable that President Chandrika Bandaranaike Kumaratunga in an interview given before the general election, stated forthrightly that the two main political parties had nurtured chauvinism for their own political interests. She said: 'The Sinhala people are not racist or even chauvinist. They are very nationalist minded but not chauvinists to exclude all other races and religions'. She sincerely felt that if one of the major parties was honest and willing to stick out its neck with regard to the ethnic issue, the Sinhala people would have supported in resolving it. With this conviction she has now shown the determination to find a peaceful solution, despite many impediments. Such quality of national leadership was blatantly absent in the political history of independent Sri Lanka.

The opportunity for a peaceful settlement of the conflict is further enhanced by the willingness of the Tamils to consider dropping the demand for an independent state of Tamil Eelam **provided adequate powers of governance can be devolved to the North-East region and the future security of the Tamils can be assured permanently via foolproof constitutional guarantees.**

Costs of the conflict

The costs to both sides need to be evaluated in terms of the following factors.

(a) Government expenditures on the military and on security as a result of the ongoing conflict;

(b) Government expenditures on payments of compensation to the dependants of the victims among the security personnel, on rehabilitation and on reconstruction etc.;

(c) Foregone economic benefits to the country and to the people as a result of the diversion of vast resources from investment to defence;

(d) Expenditures of the Tamil militants on arms and other supplies required by their cadres;

(e) Expenditures incurred by the NGOs on rehabilitation and on reconstruction etc.;

(f) Loss of human life among both the combatants and civilians (not measurable);

(g) Costs of human sufferings and displacements (not fully assessable); and

(h) Costs of a disunited country to long-term economic development and national security.

One many argue that in any struggle of this nature, it is irrelevant to evaluate the costs. This may be true when much cherished freedom is threatened by foreign invaders. In this case both the Sinhalese and the Tamils have to co-exist as neighbours and not as hostile enemies for ever. It is too well known that completely divided communities in many lands are paying a heavy price for the continuing state of belligerence.

Economic benefits of ending the conflict

The uprising in the South in 1987 had been attributed to two factors. The decline in economic activity after 1983 following the worst communal riots instigated by some responsible persons close to the then Government was one. The other was the Indo-Lanka Accord under which the Indian army was invited by the then President to play a

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role in the internal conflict in Sri Lanka.

Economic hardships cause discontent and when the affected groups become desperate violent protests and disturbances inevitably follow. This is the hard lesson learned from the urpisings in the North and in the South. Sane people do not react violently simply for its thrill. Nor do they willingly risk their lives fighting against the powerful forces of governments without some genuine grievances. Unless the root causes of any crisis are recognized and their hardships at least minimised effectively, lasting peace cannot be assured. The previous governments in Sri Lanka failed to appreciate this solid fact.

The new government is also committed to accelerated economic development under truly free market conditions. A balanced development of the different regions of the country is *sine qua non* for ensuring peace and harmony throughout Sri Lanka. Young people from all regions must have the opportunity to get involved in the development process, for their stake in it is great. Early recognition of these aspects of development by the leader also bodes well for lasting peace in Sri Lanka.

The North-East region of Sri Lanka requires for rebuilding and developing the physical infrastructures as well as for relocating and providing relief to the affected people of all races the full co-operation and support of all the people. From the development perspective, there is much work to be done for which both capital and manpower resources are required in substantial amounts.

Moreover, if Sri Lanka is to join early the group of newly industrialised states by the beginning of the twenty-first century through increased production for exports, higher and sustained economic growth in a peaceful environment during the coming years is necessary. The international market for manufactured goods and some services is becoming highly competitive and the export effort has to be intensified. The cessation of hostilities in the North and East together with the savings generated by the elimination of wasteful public expenditures will release the much needed resources for national development. The climate for enhancing the flow of foreign capital vital to augment the locally available resources will also improve considerably.

The capabilities of the Tamil youths in mastering appropriate technologies, in the improvisation of goods that were banned by the inhumane embargo imposed by the previous government and not least in the manufacture of various kinds of weapons will be available for developing the region and even producing high tech goods for exports. The prospect for achieving full employment within a short period once the conflict ends is also rated high.

Economic development without bias and corruption

In the past many important decisions have been made for political expediency ignoring completely their adverse implications over the long term to the national economy and unity. The cost of development has also been unduly increased and its scope limited by the widespread corruption in the public sector. The ordinary people of the country including the next generation are the ones who ultimately face the adverse consequence of the misuse of public funds.

The previous government was accused of reckless disregard for the public welfare in the use of scarce resources. It set a world record by appointing 91 Ministers for a country with a population of under 18 million and a total of Rs. 2,372 million per year as capital expenditures and a further Rs. 2,075 million per year as recurrent expenditures, were spent at public expense in supporting the 91 Ministers. In 1993, the actual recurrent defence expenditure was Rs. 17,677 million, while the capital expenditure was Rs. 3,105 million. (Table 62 of the Central Bank Annual Report for 1993).

With regard to biased economic and social policies of previous governments specifically targetted to penalise the Tamil community and which in effect hindered the development of the national economy, the following are a few indicators:

(i) Large numbers of Sinhala families were settled in State lands in the fringes of the traditional Tamil areas, regularly encroaching further inside under the major colonisation (land development) schemes implemented by successive governments;

(ii) Other major development projects were mostly implemented outside the remaining Tamil areas;

(iii) Despite the known economic potential of Trincomalee and its natural harbour, even the planned development of the port area was shelved on racial grounds;

(iv) all major irrigation projects implemented were designed to benefit the Sinhalese farmers in the dry zone;

(v) Since the two major factories producing cement and caustic soda/ chlorine were commissioned nearly 4 decades ago, no other public sector industries were established in the North; public sector industries in the East also remained restricted to two, namely, the production of paper and the extraction of ilmenite etc from mineral sands.

(vi) The permit system used to allocate imports of raw materials for the private sector discriminated against the entrepreneurs in the North-East;

(vii) the UNP government under the pretext of liberalisation of imports, imported cheap chilies and onions at the height of the harvesting season in the North in order to ruin the farmers there. Before this policy was introduced the Tamil farmers were producing significant quantities of these crops and the country was self-sufficient.

(viii) The enactment of the law making Sinhala language as the only official language of the nation, making it difficult for the Tamils to seek employment in government and to communicate with it;

(ix) Covert restriction on the recruitment of Tamils to the public service and on promotions even after they had acquired proficiency in the Sinhala language;

(x) Even much later when the recruitment to the government service was based on ethnic ratios, the minorities were not treated fairly in respect of their promotions. Legal action by some affected personnel resulted in the withdrawal of this scheme in so far as promotions were concerned;

(xi) Virtual ban on the recruitment of Tamils to the military;

(xii) Denying admissions of even very talented Tamil students to the universities through the discriminatory mediawise standardisation of the entrance examination marks; and

(xiii) Imposing a total embargo even on the very essential goods including medicines and those required by the farmers and fishermen in the North for their economic activities and livelihood.

Significantly, there were serious lapses in the implementation of policies and even legislation approved by governments intended to appease some of the grievances of the Tamils. Successive governments had turned a blind eye to these omissions.

The new government is obliged to consider the long-term interest of all

sections of the people and the country in formulating its policies. The initial steps taken by the new Government to do away with unnecessary public expenditures such as purchase of luxury cars for the ministers are praiseworthy. Such expenditures were conspicuous during the period of the previous Government. The office of the Bribery Commissioner has been strengthened. The amendment of the act under which the Parliamentary Commissioner for Administration is appointed so as to enable the grieved party to approach the Commissioner directly, also indicates the determination of the People's Alliance Government to fulfil its election promises. Sri Lanka has a very dismal record with regard to keeping to the election promises. The classic case is seen in the utter deception of the numerous promises given to the people by the UNP and its leader just before the 1977 general elections. Hopefully this horrible track record will be reversed by the PA government under its new and promising national leader.

The long standing grievances of the Tamils which gave rise to the civil war in the North and East after all non-violent methods of protest organized by their elected representatives failed miserably, must be addressed and a political solution found that would grant their legitimate rights and provide permanent security under all future governments. This is the challenge for the new government. The future of Sri Lanka as a united country depends crucially on granting the legitimate rights of the minorities under a just political system that does not harbour any apprehensions in the minds of the majority of the members of any community.

Overcoming the political difficulties

Although it is likely that the demand for a separate state of Tamil Eelam would be dropped provided adequate powers of governance are devolved to the re-demarcated North-East region and foolproof safeguards for the permanent security of the Tamils are provided in the new constitution, nevertheless attention is drawn to the positions of both sides in the initial talks held in Thimbu in July and August 1985. These indicate the kind of political difficulties that must be overcome for finding a common position on the issues raised.

The four principles within which a meaningful solution to the ethnic conflict was sought by the Tamils in the Thimbu talks are the following:

1. Recognition of the Tamils of Sri Lanka as a nation;
2. Recognition of the existence of an identified homeland for the Tamils in Sri Lanka;
3. Recognition of the right of self-determination of the Tamil nation; and
4. Recognition of the right to citizenship and other fundamental rights of all Tamils in Sri Lanka.

The fourth principle is no longer an issue and there is already a consensus that the fundamental rights of all citizens must be vehemently protected. With regard to the first three principles, the then government's position was that these implied the recognition of a separate Tamil nation. On the Tamil side, any solution within the unitary constitution and with very little powers devolved to the North-East region is unacceptable. It is useful to note that in the context of Sri Lankan politics, certain words are more contentious than their meanings in almost all matters pertaining to the ethnic conflict.

There are also certain other difficulties that must not be underestimated. For example, the modalities of absorbing the fighters into the society without vindictiveness and assigning to them useful roles to perform after the cessation of hostilities, must be agreed.

Lasting peace in Sri Lanka will be a reality only if the intransigence and the negative approaches which dominated the previous talks are forsaken and a new positive approach founded on reason and justice is pursued. Justice is not an empty platitude devoid of meaning. In order to decide what is just and unjust without the involvement of an impartial intermediary, both sides will have to demonstrate goodwill and understanding of each others' concerns. An important factor in Sri Lankan politics that has to be considered earnestly is that time also has a decisive say in the final outcome of the negotiations for the settlement of the conflict. It is imprudent to allow distracion and frustration to derail the peace process from its course. Any procrastination of the talks must be construed as a negative attitude. Both sides need to refrain from any action that may just do this, ending all hopes of achieving peace, security, freedom, sustainable high economic growth, higher standards of living for all the people and last but not least preserving national unity. The unanimous wish of all peace-loving people in Sri Lanka demonstrated recently must become a reality soon, otherwise they would have mised probably the last chance for the return of serenity in the beautiful country.

Human Rights and the Peoples Alliance

A Tale of Great Expectations

by Dr. Deepika Udugama, *Director, Centre for Human Rights, University of Colombo*

So the good is in and the bad is out; and the expectations are sky high. That seems to be the current political mood in the country. Hope which was in short supply just a year ago, seems to be everywhere. Even hardened cynics do acknowledge that political life of the country has got a new lease on life.

That level of optimism, like a desert flower in bloom, is remarkable in a country which was thrust into a maelstrom of bloody violence and death for nearly two decades. Given the painful experiences of this violent era, which did not seem to end, promises of good governance and the adoption of policies to end the 'fear psychosis' so widespread in the country were like a soothing salve to the tortured minds of the people who were longing for change.

Now that excitement over the euphoric 'honeymoon' with the new government seems to be tapering off, the question that is in the minds of many is how well will the promises be kept? Election pledges are one thing; but delivering the goods is an entirely different story. That is the lesson we mere mortals have learnt over the years.

To some, even the initial promises of the PA vis-a-vis human rights were vague. Pledges of an open economy with a 'human face' and the routing out of corruption were touted with great gusto during the election campaign, and occupied pride of place in the PA manifesto. On the other hand, while an end to the era of intolerance and terror was promised, the manifesto was surprisingly sparse on the human rights agenda of the Alliance. Further, the SLFP did not, like the UNP, respond to a questionnaire sent by the Civil

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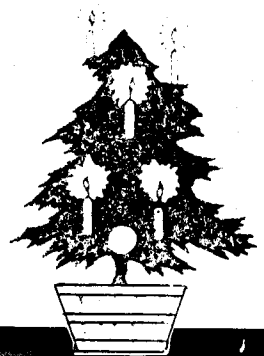

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Rights Movement to all political parties contesting the General Election to gauge the parties' responses to major human rights issues. Only smaller left wing parties in the PA, the Communist Party and the LSSP, did respond to the questionnaire. Their responses were very positive.

I personally did look forward to reading a model policy statement on the subject which was after all one of the major issues taken up by the former opposition for seventeen long years in and out of Parliament. What a disappointment! I had to wade through the entire document to find bits and pieces of human rights policy scattered in different sections.

The major features of such a policy, assuming the existence of one, that could be culled from the document were (a) that judicial review of legislation will be permitted to check compliance with the constitutional guarantees of fundamental rights, (b) the appointment of a special commission of inquiry to investigate 'murders, disappearences, unresolved crimes and political victimisation which occurred in the recent past', the provision of information regarding the disappeared within three months of 'coming into power' and compensation to the families of the disappeared, tortured or those who have lost property, and (c) the release of those illegally detained in secret camps and prisons and the expediting of legal proceedings against political prisoners where there are grounds for legal action.

Needed – a Proactive Policy

Most of those promises, while vital to providing justice to the victims of human rights violations and their families, are responses to a past crisis. The need of the hour, it can be stated, is the adoption of a proactive policy spelling out how such tragedies will be avoided in the future by providing strong safeguards for the protection of human rights e.g., by enforcing limits on police powers or by expanding the constitutional chapter on fundamental rights and the scope of remedies.

Happily, however, the first month after 'coming into power', the PA has adopted several policies which indeed do augur well for human rights protection. First was the lifting of the state of emergency in most areas of Sri Lanka. It is not a secret that torture, involuntary disappearances and extra-judicial executions were facilitated by Emergency Regulations which gave wide powers of arrest and detention to the Police and Armed Forces.

The challenge now is to ensure that emergency powers are not abused in the North and East. Abuses, if any, will also run counter to the people-oriented policy of the government in the North and East. Needless to say, if the ethnic issue is solved through a political solution many festering human rights issues of the minority communities could be positively resolved. The government's efforts in this regard so far are heartening.

Then came the strong statement of the new premier to police chiefs which got wide publicity in the press that the PA government considers the depoliticization of the Police as an urgent priority and that police excesses will not be tolerated. People heaved sighs of relief around the country as they were, on the whole, more accustomed to treating police officers more as assailants than guardians of public peace. No doubt this was a relief to many an honourable officer in the Police as well exasperated by incessant meddling in their lawful affairs by politicians and their henchmen. What clinched it all was the news that Financial Regulations were to be amended so that police and other public officials found responsible for violating fundamental rights by the Supreme Court will have to pay compensation out of their own pockets rather than from government coffers. Welcome news indeed!

A logical follow up would be that such officers will be severely disciplined under the law of the land throwing aside the cynical practice of the UNP government to promote such guilty officials. Undoubtedly, the indictment of the Army officers and others implicated in the Embilipitiya school boys case afer many years of ominous governmental silence will assist in these efforts.

The Foreign Minister has also proposed the setting up of a Human Rights Commission. The Minister of Justice has mooted the idea of appointing several Ombudspersons and expansion of their powers so that an individual petition can reach them directly rather than through the infamous practice of channelling it through the local MP and Parliament. The Foreign Minister has gone further by setting up a human rights advisory panel composed of eminent NGO activists of international repute who will be serving in an honorary capacity with the freedom to criticise governmental human rights policies should the need arise. This is indicative of a strong effort made in good faith to dispel the sullied name Sri Lanka has earned in international fora on its human rights record.

More Needs To Be Done

A lot more needs to be done of course. Human rights NGOs have made repeated representations to the UNP government and major political parties then in opposition to amend the chapter on fundamental rights in the Sri Lanka Constitution of 1978 to bring it in line with international human rights obligations of Sri Lanka undertaken by ratifying major international human rights treaties. International standards do provide broader protection than the existing constitutional provisions.

Further, the government should establish its *bona fides* by ratifying the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and making a declaration under Article 22 of the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment which will make it possible for aggrieved parties in Sri Lanka to petition international fora when they cannot obtain relief domestically. If the Optional Protocol had been ratified the families of the Embilipitiya school boys could have so petitioned UN Human Rights Committee in the absence of any response from the then government. These added safeguards are necessary so that governments will act with a greater sense of responsibnility knowing that matters which they may be confident of manipulating at home could very well reach international fora giving rise to international repercussions. Even the most well meaning governments have slipped up at times.

There is also a great need to make mechanisms of redress easily accessible to the public. One has to now trek from all over the island of Colombo to petition the Supreme Court of an alleged violation of human rights incurring heavy expenses. The available legal aid is limited and most organisations offering legal aid cannot cope with the level of demand. In this respect

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the proposed Human Rights Commission and the Ombudspersons might help provided such institutions are vested with sufficient powers and a great degree of independence to deal with matters under their purview. The procedures also must be simple and realistic so that rigid standards pertaining to legal standing of a petitioner and the time limit within which one can petition (now one has to petition to the Supreme Court within one month of the alleged violation) are eased. Otherwise, once again there will be a proliferation of useless commissions and other mechanisms which will be a burden on the government coffers without achieving anything of significance.

High Expectations

There are high public expectations vis-a-vis freedom of expression as well. This was a major aspect of the PA promise of creating a society free of fear; that is, that one will not have to suffer for one's opinions and views. The manifesto does promise to repeal all laws including constitutional provisions which are inimical to the protection of this sacrosanct right. While it pledges to broadbase the ownership of Lake House nothing is said of how the governmental stranglehold of the still state operated electronic media will be done away with.

Or will it be done away with at all? After all monopolising news stories on TV must be irresistible to any party 'in power'? A liberalization in the ownership and operational structures will be a major victory for the people and for the government as well as it will score high marks for not being an 'all talk, no action' outfit. We are also waiting with bated breath to see the promise to permit independent news bulletins to be broadcast and telecast over private radio and TV channels fulfilled and to read columns of investigative journalism and writings critical of the government to appear in Lake House papers without adverse consequences for the writers. So also are the expectations with regard to the promised legislative amendments. These comments are not made with a 'waiting to catch you' mentality but because the PA owes it to the people who have reposed so much faith in their administration.

Then on to labour policy. With the trade union movement in tatters under fierce onslaughts against left-leaning organisations for nearly two decades, hopes were high in this area too, especially with regard to providing relief to the brutalised work force in the FTZs. The statement made by the Labour Minister that trade unions will be permitted to operate in the FTZ was received with disbelief and glee by those agitating to secure rights for workers of that sector. But then the Ansell Lanka fiasco and the Minister retracting his earlier statements have soured the mood. The PA manifesto states that a main component of the proposed Charter on Employees will be the 'compulsory recognition of trade unions by employers. . .'. It is clear, however, that the government does not seem to have a free hand in this matter with the mercenary demands of the investors who have an upper hand because they can take their businesses to countries where exploitation of the labour force may be easier than here. The government will have to tread warily but not lose sight of its ideals. After all, a content workforce will increase productivity, will it not? Improving working conditions of workers does need action in the international arena too where partnerships will have to be built to tame the avarice of the investors.

It is also hoped that the open economy with a 'human face' will mete out greater social justice and bridge the economic polarization of Sri Lankan society which reached Himalayan heights during the UNP regime.

Last but not least, it has to be pointed out that the need for a cohesive and comprehensive human rights education policy has been felt for a long time on the part of all working toward the promotion and protection of human rights. Such a policy is absolutely necessary for the entrenchment of a healthy democratic political culture. Preventive measures are more effective than seeking cures. People have to know as a minimum what rights they have and what to do when those rights are violated.

Although several NGOs have launched successful efforts to disseminate basic information on human rights the reach of such programmes is limited. The government, if it is interested in long term reform rather than short term cosmetic changes, should treat the formulation of such an educational policy covering not only the formal education institutios but all sectors including the police/armed forces and the administrative service as a top priority.

Hasten Slowly

The new government aware of these high expectations should not, however, rush to bring about reforms overnight. We are only too familiar with the effects of superficial reforms and clumsily drafted legislation. The reforms should be well thought out keeping in mind the long term effects rather than the immediate political gains. To draft legislation in a few weeks merely to impress the public is useless if over time the legislation will have to be amended many times over to remedy anomalies and fill in lacunae. Under no circumstances should reform be at the expense of civil liberties. Already, civil libertarians have expressed grave reservations about certain provisions in the Bribery (Amendment) Bil and the Bill for the establishment of a Permanent Commission on Bribery and Corruption.

The same goes for the establishment of mechanisms to enforce human rights guarantees. The last thing we need now is the sprouting of new institutions with inadequate powers to serve as showpieces.

The process of reform should necessarily draw on the expertise of human rights activists because they know the situation on the ground best. They also know the adverse effects of superficial reforms. Fiercely independent activists also know when the government is about to make a blunder. In this respect the gesture of the Foreign Minister to constitute an advisory panel composed of reputed human rights activists is salutary indeed. It is a gesture of building bridges with the NGO community which was badly battered under the UNP administration. While corruption within the NGO sector should be checked under existing legislation when there are compelling reasons to do so, the baby should not be thrown out with the bath water.

In the final analysis, while reforms are necessary to improve the human rights situation in the country, the indispensable element is the political will of the government to be genuinely democratic and uphold the rule of law. Even beautifully crafted reforms will be to no avail if

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Jayalalitha Blamed for Shutting Out Lankan Tamil Scholars

Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Ms. Jayalalitha Jayaram has been roundly condemned by International Tamil scholars for shutting out Tamil scholars from Sri Lanka at the eighth International Tamil Research Conference held in Thanjavur, Tamil Nadu from January 1 to 5.

At the end of the conference, facing widespread criticism for the treatment meted out to Sri Lankan scholars, Dr. Nobolu Kuroshima, Chairman of the International Tamil Research Conference told other reputed Tamil scholars from all over the world that the recently concluded conference has asked the Chief Minister to explain her actions.

Unable to face the barrage of criticism levelled against her, Ms. Jayalalitha hurriedly despatched an official to the forum where the issue was taken up at the conclusion of the eighth conference, where her representative blamed the Central Government for cancelling the visas of the Sri Lanka academics, according to reports from Tamil Nadu. A good cross-section of the Tamil Nadu press condemned her attitude and went on to state that the spinster Chief Minister has attempted to organise the International Conference as a personal boost to her image.

Out of those who were shut out from Sri Lanka, Prof. Karthigesu Sivathamby, a Jaffna University professor and internationally reputed scholar who had contributed a lot towards Tamil language was unanimously elected as a joint secretary of the International Tamil Research Conference along with India's Prof. V. Annamalai and Singapore's Prof. Thirunavukarasu.

On the last day of the conference where Indian Prime Minister Naramsimha Rao was due as Chief Guest pamphlets were issued among the participants condemning the action of the Chief Minister *vis-a-vis* Sri Lankan scholars.

Prof. Sivathamby in a statement to the Press said that following news about the shut out in the prestigious *Hindu*, *Indian Express* and *Dinamani* newspapers several scholars contacted the Sri Lankan academics and expressed indignation at the action together with their apologies.

The influential Tamil daily *Dinamani* even carried an editorial under the heading 'Flying Tradition' and condemned the action of the Tamil Nadu government. DMK Chief Muththuvel Karunanidhi, the Tamil Nadu Communist Party and the Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Congress, Nallakannu issued statements on this most inhospitable attitude which totally belies the Tamil tradition and culture, Prof. Sivathamby stated. 'It has created a big uproar among the International Tamil community', he added.

What has really angered the International Tamil community is the fact that the idea to hold the Intrenational Tamil Conference periodically at various international venues was mooted by Rev. Thaninayagam, a respected Tamil scholar from Jaffna. Others who had contributed greatly for the uplift of the Tamil Language and its culture include great men of the calibre of Arumuga Navalar, Rev. Gnanapragasam, poet Somasunderam, Ven. Vipulananda Swamigal, Pundit C. Kanapathy Pillai, poet Kumaraswamy and poet Periyathambi Pillai, all from Sri Lanka and whose names are synonymous with Tamil Language and culture world-wide.

'Ms. Jayalalitha must have thought that Sri lankan scholars are armed only with guns instead of pens', the local Tamil weekly *Thinamurasu* surmised. 'After all, how can you expect this lady to honour our Tamil scholars when in her own country she has jailed hundreds of Tamil scholars' the paper further stated.

The *Thinamurasu* went on to quote late Kalki Krishnamoorthy who during a visit to Jaffna three decades ago running an article on *Kalki* magazine said that in Jaffna even if you accidentally bang on some one he or she is an intellectual. Such was the high esteem the editor of that mass circulated Tamil weekly held Sri Lankan Tamils.

Professor Not Wanted

Prof. Sithamby said that he was woken up at midnight by Tamilnadu Police and told to leave the state, as he was not wanted for the Eighth World Tamil Conference in Thanjavur.

'The blame rests with the organisers of the Conference in not having informed the authorities concerned that we were invitees. In fact we had gone on a special invitation', said Professor K. Sivathamby, Head of the Aesthetics Faculty of Jaffna University.

Prof. Sivathamby said he had received a special invitation from the President of the International Association for Tamil Research, Dr. Noboru Karashima, Japanese national, to attend the World Tamil Conference in Thanjavur from January 1, and address its plenary sessions. He was one of the seven academics invited to speak.

Asked if he faced any difficulties in obtaining visa at the Indian High Commission, in Colombo, he said there was no difficulty and the High Commission had issued visas to him, his wife and daughter.

'I feel what happened to us in Thanjavur was an insult to Sri Lankan scholars. If they did not want us to attend, they could have told us in Madras on arrival, rather than wait till my family and I reached Thanjavur', he said.

Explaining the whole scenario, Prof. Sivathamby said: 'I went to Madras a week ahead of the conference to attend to some of my publication work. I have written some books. So I went to see about their publication. From December 27 we stayed at the university guest house in Madras. One day we found some policemen at our doorstep. On inquiry they said they were there to give us protection.

'I asked them from whom I was being protected, but they did not reply. I told them I needed no protection. Yet they stayed on. On December 30, we went to Thanjavur. The next day I met the organisers, paid my registration fees and got the necessary papers and the badge to attend the conference. But there too I still could not get a clear picture as to who had ordered Police protection for us.

In Thanjavur, we stayed at the campus suite, but at 12.30am with the dawn of the New Year, there was a knock at the door. My wife opened the door and here too we found some police officers in civvies. When I inquired why they had come they told me that my visa was withdrawn. We were stunned. I showed them all the paper and yet they were not convinced, all they said was, 'we have looked into all that'.

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of demand for services in Sinhala, Tamil and English;

- Assessment of the current capacities of particular institutions, in terms of personnel and other logistical requirements, to meet the demand;
- Identification of feasible alternatives in terms of cost effectiveness, time efficiency and healthy public relations (i.e. client satisfaction), to raise institutions' capacities to meet the demand;
- Assisting each of the institutions in choosing the most suitable alternative for reform and capacity building and in scheduling implementation;
- Monitoring progress of implementation and taking appropriate action to assist institutions lagging behind schedule; and
- Informing the public and mobilise public opinion in support of the decommunalisation programme with the aid of mass media and by setting up mechanisms to receive feedback on implementation from members of the public.

Continued from page 24

the political will to strictly enforce the law is absent. Another factor which we as members of the public must not forget is that we as those devoted to the enthroning of democracy and the rule of law have a sacrosanct duty to be well-informed and proactive in monitoring the performance of the government. Governments once entrenched in power do need a kick or two at times to be reminded of the social contract they have to uphold.

If human rights activists are harsh in judging the performance of the PA, it is because of the belief that the Alliance more than any other current political force can deliver the goods. Similarly, the past cycles of violence while traumatizing the polity have also been a great learning and conscientising experience for the people. Now that people have found their voice again they will not hesitate to speak up.

With great expectations coated with goodwill we are watching and waiting for a better tomorrow. Our fervent hope is that the wait will not be in vain. After all, we got this unique chance for change after an agonizingly long time.

Continued from page 15

and state have to be answered simultaneously and that a constitutional settlement is an ineluctable part of powersharing, in response to the erosion of liberal democracy and ethnic harmony.

The government's and the President's good intentions notwithstanding, there is still residual prejudice that has to be combatted before genuine powersharing can be accepted. The traditional attitude towards Federalism, as an obvious mechanism for powersharing in Sri Lanka, stands as telling testimony to the depth of these feelings. Federalism has attracted such opprobrium from the dominant centrist political culture of Sri Lanka, that it has been used almost as the sole criterion for ruling out constitutional mechanisms, as a way out of our current travails. It is worth, therefore, analysing the Indo-Sri Lankan Accord to demonstrate the range of misconceptions and prejudices that have inhibited the utility of constitutional reform for conflict resolution and democracy.

(Continued in next issue).

'Pope Had No Intention To Insult Buddhism' — Archbishop

Archbishop of Colombo and President of the Catholic Bishop's Conference, the Rt. Rev. Nicholas Marcus Fernando, in a letter to the Venerable Mahanayake Theras of the Malwatte, Asgiriya, Amarapura and Ramagna Nikayas, has expressed deep regret that the feelings of the Buddhist prelates and laity have been hurt by some of the contents of the book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* by Pope Paul II, and asked for the compassionate understanding of the Buddhists in taking it in the context of the multiple religions that exist in the world.

Following is the full text of the letter:

Your letter to us following up on the newspaper reports on some sections of the book *Crossing the Threshold of Hope* by Pope John Paul II has deeply perturbed us and our Catholic community. It has unfortunately occurred at a time when we were so joyfully preparing for the visit of the Holy Father with the cooperation of all our countrymen, of all faiths. As you yourselves have stated some of you have already sent us for publication goodwill messages welcoming the Pope to our country. It is sad indeed that this goodwill should have been soured so suddenly and so unexpectedly.

We believe that some explanation on our part as Bishops of this country representing the Catholics, will help all of us to understand this problem and avoid damaging the goodwill that has always existed among us. Our humble attempt at an explanation is as follows:

We can assure our Mahanayake Theras and the Buddhist clergy and laity that the Pope had no intention whatsoever to criticise the doctrines or to hurt the feelings of our Buddhist brethren. We say so with confidence because we know, following up on the decision and declarations made at the most recent Vatican Council, which the Holy Father even quotes in this present book (in the preceding chapter), the Pope respects and admires all that is good in all other religions. It is this Pope himself who called a meeting of all religious leaders of the world for a day of peace at the shrine of a saint who was a model of peace during his time, in order to convince the world, that different religions can get together for peace as well as for the general good and progress of man.

What has, however been written in the book in question, has to be taken in the context of the multiple religions that exist in the world. It is not possible and we do not expect, for example, a Buddhist or a member of any other religion to have the same concept or understanding of Jesus Christ or his teachings as we Christians have. Similarly we Catholics cannot have the same concepts as Buddhists regarding Lord Buddha and his teachings. It is a question of perspective.

Once again we reiterate, the intention could not have been anything negative or polemical as his other writings, quotations and even his own inter-religious acts proclaim in very clear terms.

We the Catholic Bishops of Sri Lanka do realize however, that the feelings of our Budsdhist prelates and laity have been deeply hurt by some of the contents of this publication. We express our deep regret to each and everyone and we hope and pray that the goodwill and understanding that has prevailed all these centuries among the various religious groups of our country will not be disturbed but rather be strengthened further by the compassionate understanding of our Buddhist brethren.

Continued from page 25

'I told them that I did not come here as an uninvited guest. All this was of no avail. They took me, my wife and my daughter on January 1 to Trichy by car. In Trichy I saw Prof. Shanmugathas, Prof. A. Velupillai, visiting lecturer of Uppsala University, Sweden and Swedish scholar Schalk. We were kept in three different hotels. On January 2 while Prof. Shanmugathas left for Colombo from Trichy, we were taken to Madras by van and we stayed at New Woodlands Hotel.

'As my tickets etc., were left behind at the Madras University hostel, I shifed there as we were to take flight on 4th morning'.

Asked whether there was any harassment caused to him by the police, Prof. Sivathamby said he was treated politely. Prof. Sivathamby and his family returned to Colombo on Thursday, 5 January.

Continued from page 6

permanent end to hostilities. The TULF wants this to be a prelude to meaningful negotiations for a political settlement of the problem.

On the question whether the LTTE can be trusted: especially going by its past record, there is no question about trusting the LTTE. They have agreed, and we will wait and see. In the first instance, there should be mutual trust which should blossom into a permanent solution and we would like all political parties, militant or otherwise, to get into the mainstream of politics.

Douglas Devananda, MP, Leader, Eelam People's Democratic Party (EPDP):

The truce will certainly give some relief to the people. But the problems of the Tamil people are quite different from the problems of Prabhakaran. The problems of the Tamil people cannot be solved by talking only with Prabhakaran.

Mr. Prabhakaran already enjoys enormous power with his own military and his own administration. In the event of the peace talks succeeding, what will the LTTE leader get? It will only be a demotion from his present status of power. If the President is genuine in her attempt to find peace, the results of her efforts will expose the LTTE to the world and it will isolate Mr. Prabhakaran.

D. Siddharthan, Leader, People's Liberation Organisation of Tamil Eelam (PLOTE):

We welcome this move. We hope that it will develop into a permanent ceasefire and pave the way for a permanent solution and a permanent peace. But a word of caution: In the past the LTTE had used the opportunity of a ceasefire to eliminate their political opponents. Hundreds of cadres of our party, including leaders like Vasu and Kannan were killed by the LTTE when they had a ceasefire with the IPKF. I also recall the assassination of Amirthalingam, Yogeswaran, and Sam Thambimuttu. Though we have our serious doubts, let us wait and see, and hope for the best.

READERS FORUM

OF THREATS AND CIVILISED NORMS

I WRITE with reference to your correspondent S. Pothalingam's outburst captioned 'Traitors Are More Dangerous' in your issue for December 1994. Keeping to Voltaire's dictum, which is shown on the cover of your journal, you have no doubt adhered to civilised norms and given his letter space despite the implied threat of dire consequences.

On reading his letter, I was reminded of the time when journals like the *India Today, Thuklaq* etc., were attacked and burnt a couple of years ago in Jaffna; the bomb that was set to blast under the machinery of the *Eela Nadu*, the Tamil daily newspaper etc., and the fate that befell individuals like Dr. Rajani Thiranagama, for having associated herself with the facts set out in *Broken Palymyrah* and the late Mr. Sabalingam, in France and still recently the horror of what happened to Mr. Karavai Kandasamy, not forgetting Messrs. Amirthalingam, Yogeswaran, G.A. Panchalingam former St. John's College Principal, Anandarajah, Annamalai of the NSSP and hundreds of others.

All of them were killed because those who arbitrarily arrogated to themselves the right to lead the cause for self-determination, freedom and self respect for the Tamil people of Sri Lanka judged that 'traitors to the cause' should be eliminated first. They do not believe that it is a matter for history to decide who the traitors are. According to these self appointed leaders of the Sri Lankan Tamils and their admirers and supporters like Pothalingam, FRCS, all of us should do as told, not question why or how, but be prepared to sacrifice and live with fingers crossed dreaming that Eelam is on the shoulders of the LTTE boys around the corner.

'We will not tolerate any criticism of our actions or words from anyone who suggests or thinks anything other than what we permit; you live or die as we determine; Prabakaran is our unique leader the architect of our future; he is omnipotent and infallible; he commands, we execute; we dare and will not spare; we will lead withour blinkers on, you follow blind; we wear cyanide necklets and hold AK47s, so beware and hold your breath' seems to be the motto of the LTTE which keeps goose marching on its slippery path to its land of an authoritarian intolerant abysmal Eelam led on by its Fuehrer.

I have been a reader of *Tamil Times* from its inception and cannot recall any outburst worded in the lines of FRCS Pothalingam's unconcealed threat calling upon you to refrain from giving space in your columns for articles that are critical of the LTTE and of Mr. Prabakaran. As the Editor of the *TT* you obviously know your job and I am sure will not be threatened and will continue to enrich the columns of your journal with the scholarship of the likes of Messrs. Hoole, Uyangoda and others to inform your readers.

Remember! Political short sightedness in Sri Lanka commenced with a managed media. When editors turned a blind eye to what was going on, and apathy, expediency, stupidity and plain ignorance caused people to become complacent and not ask questions which were felt to be awkward or unpopular.

When the Jaffna public library and the *Eela Nadu* daily newspaper office were torched, people in the South were not informed of the implications for the country at large properly. It was not long before they themselves began to suffer the kind of repression that was suffered by the Tamils, with people being taken out after the midnight knock on the door and disposed of with a bullet in the back of the head and bodies burnt on byways and side roads or floating down a river or stream. By that time it was too late to do anything, the media had become the tool of a manipulative regime to enhance the interests of a coterie of political elite which relied on a private security force improvised from the police and armed forces. What happened after that is now history we all are aware of. Shouldn't we learn from that?

R.S. Ganeshan,

44, Ringwood,
Bretton South,
Peterborough, PE3 9SH.

FROM AN 'AVERAGE READER'!!

I AM, as you are doubtless aware, a keen reader of your esteemed journal. I hope that the comments that I offer below though ostensibly unfavourable and could be mistaken by some to be carping criticism or nit-picking are viewed by you as constructive criticism

Firstly, there appears to be a recent tendency on the part of some columnists to use your journal to carry on a personal or political vendetta against one side or other in the ethnic conflict. This should be avoided at all costs. The recent letter by Dr. Pothalingam on the articles by Rajan Hoole (I may not share his views) and the article by Professor R. Hoole are a reflection of the growing resentment by the readership against such crusading writers.

Secondly, there appears to be the need for editing some parts of some of the contributions to keep it in line with the broad guidelines of non-partisanshiup that you have rightfully set for yourself and also for stripping them of unwanted trivia or extraneous material that make the article sound polemical; besides, you should ensure that too much damage is not done to the Queen's English! Surely the readership of the *Tamil Times* is not interested in Thampotherampillai's daughter 'running through a hole in the back fence' and he in the course of the hunt for his romantic daughter' assaulting his niece who was breast-feeding her child'!! A critique of Tamil Biographies need not dwell in such inordinate length on such boring details! Certainly, the reference to Goddess 'Parvati donning a blouse to address Victorian sensibilities' could and should have been avoided. I will be surprised if readers do not join issue with you on this matter.

Finally when I read Rajan Hoole's article on the need perceived by him for Tamils to 'wake up'!, I could not help noting the jargon that he has laboriously woven into his article; viz. polarisation, atomisation, legitimisation, diaspora, internalise, conceptualise, Popperian sense, mindset etc etc!!

The ideas could all have been expressed in **simple**, concise English and would have been more intelligible to the average reader like me!

Furthermore, his reference to 'Professor Suriyakumaran as an experienced Civil Servant closely involved in the negotiations on the ethnic issue between national leaders' reminded me of the famous reference to the Holy Roman Empire as being neither holy nor Roman nor an empire! Those who know this worthy gentleman intimately (for the last 40 years!) know that

Suriyakumaran was an economist who after a short stint in Government Service served almost his entire working life without interruption but with distinction perhaps, in the United Nation's specialised Agencies in foreign capitals; he did not have a ringside view of the ethnic situation as it developed on the ground as to be in a position to 'testify' as Hoole pontificates! I can certainly vouch for the fact, having held positions in Sri Lanka where even classified information was within my reach, (besides having more than one close member of my family in Parliament!) that nothing could be further form the truth! There is no authentic evidence or document whatsoever – personal claims apart! Surely your readers should not be allowed to be taken on a ride by people who claim first hand knowledge of the matter without having it or being in a position to establish it with a minimum of credibility! As you are doubtless aware, credibility, accuracy and objectivity are cardinal principles in journalism and even perhaps in journalese.

T. Pathmanathan,

West Harrow,
Middx.

CHELVA'S BIOGRAPHY

I READ with interest the review by Rajan Philips, of the political biography of S.J.V. Chelvanayakam by Prof. A. Jeyaratnam Wilson (*TT*, Oct. '94). While the reviewer has commented on what is included in the book, permit me to make some comments on what is missing in Wilson's biography. This is not to disappoint the prospective buyers or to ridicule the effort of Prof. Wilson, but to reveal how much Chelva offers for future biographers. I have nothing other than admiration and respect for Prof. Wilson's scholarship.

I look back to the year 1970. **Time:** The day after the May general election in the then Ceylon. **Place:** Bambalapitiya bus stand (towards the Borella route). **Action:** In front of the newspaper shop, about 40-50 Sinhalese (all males) were listening to the election results on the radio in Sinhala, set by the news vendor. I was a bystander (probably the only Tamil in that gathering), waiting for the Borella-bound bus. In repeated succession, the results from the Southern electorates were being announced and those who were gathered there expressed their jubilation by clapping for the SLFP winners of that election. Then, like a bolt, the election result of the Kankesanthurai constituency was announced, and Chelvanayakam was reported as the winner. All those who were gathered there expressed their admiration for Chelva too by clapping and nodding their heads. There, I witnessed how much respect Chelva commanded among the ordinary Sinhalese folks. The book by Prof. Wilson fails to record in detail, how the ordinary Sinhalese and Muslims perceived Chelva as the politician.

I was also puzzled that Prof. Wilson had stated, 'The Muslims did not support the FP but they respected Chelvanayakam and placed their faith in his goals for protecting the rights of the Tamil linguistic groups' (p.112). In the 1956 election, Gate Mudaliyar M.S. Kariapper (Kalmunai) and his son-in-law M.M. Mustapha (Pottuvil) won on the FP ticket. In the July 1960 election, M.C. Ahamed won the Kalmunai seat as an FP candidate. M.E.H. Mohamed Ali was elected for Mutur in 1962 (by-election) and 1965 as an FP nominee. These MPs later joined either the UNP or SLFP. But the fact that they were elected first as the nominee of the FP show that between 1956 and 1965, Tamil speaking Muslims of the Eastern Province did support the FP.

I also noticed that no mention is made in the book about the FP MPs (such as C. Rajadurai and V. Alegacone) who represented constituencies outside the Jaffna peninsula. Their representation of Batticaloa and Mannar as FP MPs was the main difference, that politically separated Chelva from G.G. Ponnambalam. Whereas the Tamils in Batticaloa and Mannar placed much faith on Chelva, G.G. Ponnambalam's circle of influence was mainly restricted within the Jaffna peninsula.

It is my impression that Chelva's biography would have been further enriched if in-depth use of existing public documents (such as Chelva's speeches in the parliament and political cartoons in the Lake House press which featured Chelva) had been made. I vividly remember one cartoon which appeared in 1968 after the UNP-FP split. I have forgotten who the cartoonist is (either Wijesoma or Opatha). He drew Dudley Senanayake (as the male) standing with a broom stick in the garden putting a perplexed face, with Chelva (dressed in sari) with a suitcase in his hand heading toward the gate. That cartoon did tell quite a lot of messages regarding the Sinhala-Tamil links in the then Ceylon.

I wish to stress again that the above comments are made only to show that Chelva has much to offer for future biographers. Prof. Wilson has just opened the route. Others can follow him for a richer harvest. Lastly, I thank Prof. Wilson for sending me a complimentary copy of his book.

Sachi Sri Kanthi,

Osaka BioScience Institute,
6-2-4 Furuedai, Suita,
Osaka 565 Japan.
Nov. 13, 1994.

Continued from page 4

It is ironic that the Pope, the messenger of peace should have engendered so many non-peaceful controversies.

One military commentator writing in the government controlled Sunday observer said that the visit of the Pope could even merit a close scrutiny of the Roman Catholic church in the north which is alleged to be sympathetic to the rebel cause. But that's another controversy that can wait.

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MATRIMONIAL

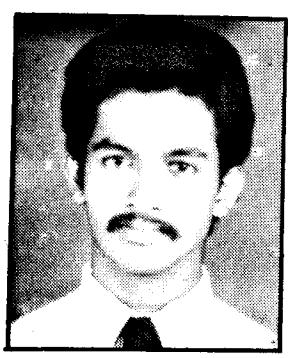
Jaffna Hindu parents *seek partner for B.Sc. graduate daughter, 38, teaching in Sri Lanka. Send details. M 760 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek professional partner for daughter, fair, pretty, mid-thirties, graduate teacher. Send horoscope, details. M 765 c/o Tamil Times.*

Jaffna Hindu parents *seek suitable partner, preferably from U.K. for son, 34, graduate, Norway resident in good employment. Phone 081 723 1805 (U.K.).*

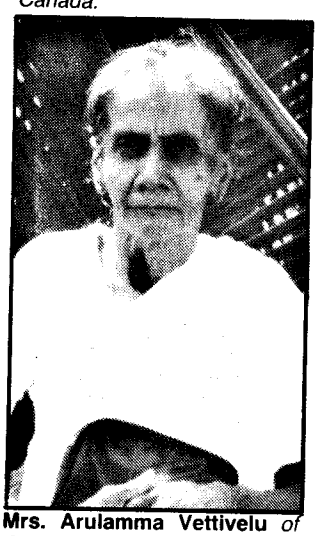
Jaffna Catholic parents *seek partners for son, medical doctor, 28 and daughter, 26, computer graduate employed as designer. Send details. M 767 c/0 Tamil Times.*

OBITUARIES



Dr. Vakeeson, *beloved son of Mr. S. Ponniah (Advocate) and Mrs. N. Ponniah (Retired Vice-Principal, Chundikuli Girls' College) of Thirunelveli, Jaffna and T. Maheswary (Foster Mother); loving brother of Anandhi, Dr. Vasuki (both of Botswana) and Sivakamy (UK); brother-in-law of A. Ishwaran, J. Kailainathan and Dr. Iyngaran Vanniasegeram; uncle of Luckshmy and Mukunthan expired. Cremation took place in Jaffna, Sri Lanka on 8th December 1994 – P.O. Box 603, Gaborone, Botswana.*

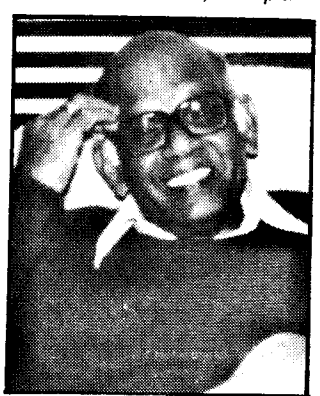
Mylvaganam Paramanathan *(Teacher, Brunei; Ex-Lecturer, Teachers' Training College, Palaly; Ex-Teacher, Jaffna Central College), dearly beloved husband of Kiruba (nee Moses); beloved father of Chitran (USA), Geetha (USA) and Sumi Chinnaiah (Canada); brother of J.M. Rajaratnam (USA), Rasamany Thevarajah (Canada), Dr. M. Sathananthan (Canada), M. Karunananthan (Brunei), M. Rajeswaran (UK) and brother-in-law of late Dr. M. Karunairatnam, M. Selvaratnam (USA) and Dr. M. Nesarajah (USA) was called to the Lord after a brief illness on 21st December. The funeral took place in Montclair, USA – 165 Cherokee Blvd Unit 146, Willowdale, Ontario M2J 4T7, Canada.*



Mrs. Arulamma Vettivelu *of Chetty Street, Nallur, Jaffna, Sri Lanka; beloved wife of the late Kathiravetpillai Vettivelu; loving mother of Sivakolunthu (UK), Gandhi (Nallur, Jaffna), Kathiravelu (Australia); mother-in-law of Mr. R. Sathasivam (UK), Mrs. G. Kanthimathy (Nallur), Mrs. K. Chandraleka (Australia); grandmother of Devambikai, Devakumaran (UK), Gajan, Priadharshini (Nallur), Geethanjana, Krishanth, Sivanjana (Australia) passed away peacefully on 25th November 1994. Cremation took place on 5th December 1994 in London.*

All members of her family sincerely thank relatives and friends who attended the funeral, sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy – Mr. & Mrs. Sathasivam, 287 Hampton Road, Ilford, Essex IG1 1PL. Tel: 081 478 1763.

Mrs. Vethavalli Thiagarajah, *beloved wife of the late Mr. P. Thiagarajah (Jaffna Hindu College); loving mother of Vijayanathan (Canada), Jeganathan (Sri Lanka) and Vijayalakshmi (Ethiopia); mother-in-law of Radha, late Lalitha and Thirugnanasambanthar; grandmother of Soundharie, Vijayakumar, Meera, Pratheeba, Janarthanan and Abarna passed away on 6.12.94 and was cremated on 7.12.94 at Nallur, Sri Lanka – FAO, P.O.Box 5536, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.*



Mr. K. Rajasingham, *Retired Deputy Commissioner of Inland Revenue, Sri Lanka; son of the late Mr. & Mrs. Kathiravelu of Illavalai; son-in-law of the late Mr. & Mrs. Chinniah Pillai of Koddady; beloved husband of Nageswary; loving father of Chitra (Jayanthy) of Wellington, New Zealand; Vasanthy of New Malden, U.K., Guru (Satguru) of Cheshire, U.K. and Mohan of Kingston, U.K.; father-in-law of S.N. Pathmanathan (New Zealand), Vijayaratnam (U.K.), Niranjali (U.K.) and Ranji (U.K.); grandfather of Kavita, Vathany, Vasugi, Ramesh and Mathura; brother-in-law of late Nagamuttu, late Ponnampalam, late Nagiah and Sanmuganathan passed away on 8.1.95 in London and was cremated on 12th January '95. Mrs Rajasingham and all members of her family sincerely thank relatives and friends who attended the funeral and sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy. – 20 Arundel Road, Kingston, Surrey KT1 3RZ. Tel: 081 942 1042.*

Mrs. Rasamma Balasingam, *beloved wife of late Mr. V. Balasingam of Green Memorial Hospital, Manipay; loving mother of Choodamani (Vaddukoddai, Sri Lanka), Dr. Thalayasingam (U.K.), Dr. Chinthamani (India), late Shanmugasegeram (Canada), Thanigaimani (Kandy, Sri Lanka), Dr. Sironmani (U.K.), Dr. Kangadevi (USA), Indrani and Kalaivani (USA) passed away on 4.12.94. Cremation took place on 5th December. – Moolai Road, Vaddukoddai, Sri Lanka.*

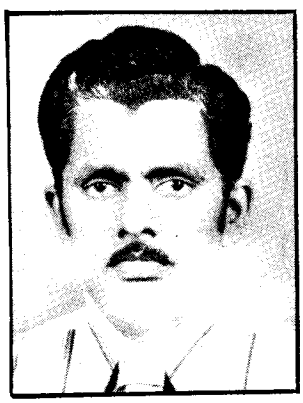
31st DAY REMEMBRANCE

Mrs. Ponnammah Sinnathamby *of Thirunelveli, Jaffna; beloved wife of late Arumugam Sinnathamby; loving mother of Nallainathan, Thillainathan (both of Australia); Parameswary (Thirunelveli), Kanagambigai (Australia) and Hamsini (Essex); dear mother-in-law of Sivanesamalar, Maheswarathevy, Thilaganathan, Ratnavel and Ravindran and fond grandma of Nagathepan, Luxumanan, Vathana, Ruban, Hanusha, Usha, Kavitha, Sumanthiran,*

Umaiyal and Karthigan passed away peacefully on the 21st of December 1994 and the cremation took place in Essex on the 22nd December.

All members of the family sincerely thank relatives and friends who attend the funeral and sent floral tributes and messages of sympathy. – 127 Bronksome Avenue, Stanford-le-Hope, Essex, U.K. Tel: 0375 676551.

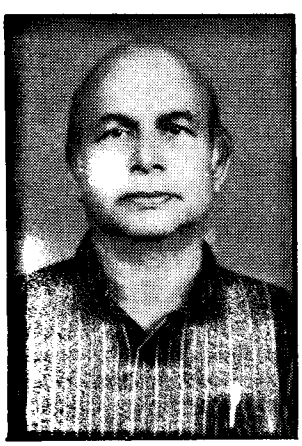
IN MEMORIAM



Navalar Kanapathippillai Navasothy
Born: 2-4-1941
Died: 4-1-1990

Five years have flown since the day fate plucked your life away. But still, the great vacuum you left in us all fills, with ever flowing memories of you. Amidst the longing and love we feel, glows bright your name with so many of your good deeds.

Fondly remembered by your wife Rani, children Manivannan, Vathani and Yalini, mother, brothers and sister, family and friends.

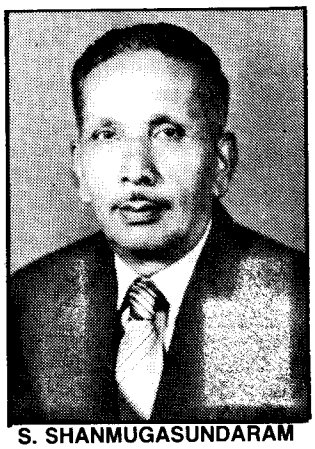


In Loving Memory of
Justice Tellippalai Wanam Rajaratnam

Retired Supreme Court Judge and Member of Parliament Colombo on the 1st Anniversary of his passing away on 15th January 1994.

'Death cannot separate us for we love you appa forever and ever'
Sadly missed and dearly loved by his wife and children.

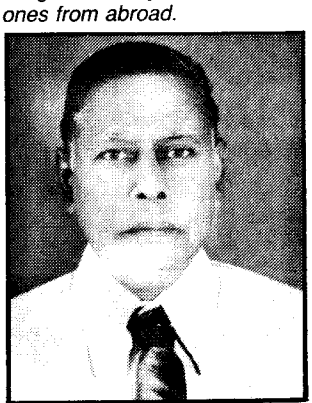
In Treasured Memory of



S. SHANMUGASUNDARAM
A.G.A. Jaffna, Sri Lanka
Born: 17.01.1926
Died: 09.02.1985

Though lost for ten long years,
Memories of you will always linger,
Especially of the times we spent to-gether,
We'll always cherish them for-ever.

Fondly remembered by wife, daughter, family and all loved ones from abroad.



In ever loving memory of **Mr. Visvanathar Seevaratnam** *(Retired Technical Officer, formerly PWD Overseer) of Tholpuram; son of late Mr. & Mrs. Visvanathar of Suthumalai; son-in-law of late Mr. & Mrs. Chelliah of Tholpuram; beloved husband of Rameswary; father of Santhirakumar (formerly of Samuel Sons, Colombo, presently London), Devakumaran (Kumar Agencies, Vavuniya), Rajakumary, Vijayakumary and Jegathambal; father-in-law of Sivakumari (formerly Vembady Girls High School), Jeyasundari (Sundaram Brothers), Kumarasivam (People's Bank, Chunnakam), Satkunanathan (Lake House, Colombo) and Kuganesan (France); grandfather of Thayanujee, Shivanujee, Mayruja, Kajinthan, Niroshan, Sivaseelan, Jeyaseelan, Vanathy, Kumarathy, Inthu and Jenan on the first anniversary of his passing away on 12th January 1994.*

In fond memory of **Mrs. Ganeswary Tharmalingam** *of Kondavil East on the second anniversary of her passing away on 21.1.93.*

Sadly missed and fondly remembered by her loving husband Tharmalingam; children Brabalini, Bremjit and Ranjit; son-in-law Dr. W.N. Linganandhan; daughters-in-law Dr. Vani Bremjit and Shamini Ranjit; grandchildren Abirami, Sathya, Praneeta, Praseetha, Prashoban, Praveen and Anjana – 32 Anvil Way, North Springfield, Chelmsford, Essex CM1 6SZ. Tel: 0245 466363.

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

February 1 *Feast of St. Brigid.*
Feb. 2 *Feast of Presentation of Lord Jesus.*
Feb. 3 *Sathurthi.*
Feb. 11 *Eekathasi; Feast of Our Lady of Lourdes.*
Feb. 13 *Pirathosam.*
Feb. 14 *Feast of St. Valentine.*
Feb. 15 *Full Moon.*
Feb. 16 *Masi Maham.*
Feb. 21 *Feast of St. Damion.*
Feb. 22 *Feast of St. Peter, the Apostle.*
Feb. 25 *Eekathasi.*
Feb. 27 *Pirathosam; Sivarathiri.*

At the Bhawan Centre, 4A Castletown Road, London W14 9HQ. Tel: 071-381 3086/ 4608.

Feb 3 *7.30pm Indian Republic Day Celebrations. Speeches and Cultural Programme. All welcome.*

Feb 18 *7.00pm Bhawan's Tamil Play 'Kidnap in Kelambakkam'.*

Feb. 26 *6.30pm Kathak by Jayshree Acharya.*

Hartley College Past Pupils Meet

Hartley College Past Pupils' Association, U.K. had its A.G.M. and Annual Dinner at the Waterend Barn Hotel, St. Albans on 4.12.94. The A.G.M. was chaired by the President Dr. K. Sivakumaran. The secretary and treasurer presented their annual reports. The association set aside £2,000 for college projects.

The A.G.M. was followed by the annual dinner. The Chief Guest was Mr. K. Rajalingam, former Head Prefect and Sportsman of the Year 1962. Guest speakers included Hartleyites Dr. V. Navaratnam, Mr. C.J.T. Thamotheram and Mr. K. Pooranampillai. Mr. R. Kelley, a V.S.O. teacher of English at Hartley College between 1973 and 1975 was the Guest Speaker. The following were the main office bearers elected for 1995. Dr. K. Sivakumaran (President), Mr. V. Santhalingam (Vice President), Mr. P. Harrichandiran (Secretary) and Mr. J.A.W. Strong (Treasurer).

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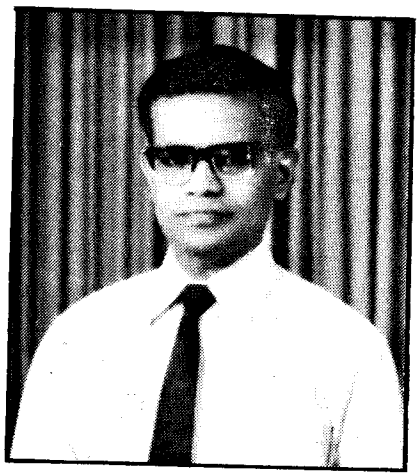
Dr. Subramaniam Ponnampalam – An Appreciation



I consider it a privilege and an honour to place on record a few words about the late Dr. S. Ponnambalam. As far as I could remember, he passed out as a doctor in 1956. He was appointed a House Officer to the District Hospital, Deniyaya, when I was the District Medical Officer of the hospital. I had the good fortune to work along with him.

He was an officer for whom I had the highest regard. He was very punctual and even during his off hours was seen in the hospital attending to the needs of patients. He was dedicated to the profession, had the highest sense of duty and responsibility. He was extremely kind to the patients whether they were rich or poor. He was always available for any emergency call and the nurses and apothecaries had no difficulty in summoning him and he was prompt. I was very confident that he had a bright future ahead of him.

I had the pleasure of working along with him again when I was D.M.O. Tangalle. His devotion to duty had not changed. His moral character was irreproachable. We continued our friendship and were close family friends.

He passed the Primary F.R.C.S. and continued to work, waiting for his turn to be sent abroad for the final Fellowship. He passed the F.R.C.S. and unlike quite a few, returned to fulfil his obligations by the Department and to serve the people.

He worked as a surgeon in Kurunagala and for 18 years in Jaffna. He served in Jaffna during the peak of the troubles and maintained the highest standards of medical ethics. He was a very successful surgeon and had a bright career. As a surgeon, he operated on the rich and the poor, even when the poor had no means to pay his legitimate fees, here laid his greatness.

He was very religious and was a dutiful son. He went all out to help his brothers. Due to the responsibilities he shouldered, he married late in life. He leaves behind his beloved wife and two daughters. I am confident that GOD will give them the strength and health to get over the irreparable loss in the years to come. I have lost a longstanding and sincere friend.

Though he was a Hindu, his life has been such that the Biblical quotation, 'I have fought a good fight, I had finished my course, I have kept my faith. Henceforth is laid for me a Crown of righteousness' aptly fits a person like the late Dr. Ponnampalam. May his soul rest in peace.

Herbert Ariaratnam Jesudason,
(Retired Director General, Health Services, Sri Lanka).
Toronto, Canada.

Pulavarmani Periyathambipillai Honoured

The Sri Lankan Government has issued a postage stamp to honour Pulavarmani A. Periyathambipillai. There have been several Tamil poets who have left their footprints on the sands of time. Some of them have lived in recent times and among them Pulavarmani Periyathambipillai stands supreme.

Born in Mandur in Batticaloa District in 1899, he rose to fame in later years as 'Pulavarmani' (gem of a poet), on account of his fine poetry. He followed in the footsteps of the famous Subramaniya Bharathy of South India and wrote beautiful poems in simple language with a touch of humanism. His main themes were national unity and racial harmony and won the hearts of one and all by his fair approach on national problems.

During his early years, he lived in South India and North Sri Lanka where he saw caste disharmony with shock and abhorrence. There was discrimination in the name of race, religion and caste and he sprang at this hypocrisy with his poetic sword. In later years he became a poet of national fame. Though he has written a number of poems, only a few have appeared in book form. The following are some of his works which have been acclaimed (a) Bhavagat Gita Venpa – Karmayogam, Bakthiyogam and Gnanayogam (b) Pulavarmani Kavithaikal (c) Palai Kali – a study of Kalithokai (d) Ullathum Nallathum. Many of these books have appeared posthumously, though his writings appeared as serialised articles in newspapers in his time.

Pulavarmani held several honorary posts at national level in social, literary and religious organisations. The Tamil speaking world was thirsting for his poems and speeches. He lived a very simple life and died on 2nd November 1978.

He had won several honours for his poetic works. His book 'Ullathum Nallathum' won the Sahitya award of the Hindu Cultural Affairs Ministry. Scholarships for Tamil Literature have been created in his name at the Eastern University and at the Jaffna University.

Cancer Aid For North/East Sri Lanka

The Association established in U.K. to provide financial, medical and other assistance to cancer patients in North/East Sri Lanka, a year back is pleased with the response for their appeal for funds made in May last year. They have 30 members who are contributing a minimum of £5 a month and have a fund of £4,000, of which £2,500 was contributed by other well wishers. They are taking steps to register their association as a charity.

The association as mentioned in their appeal is actively working towards the setting up of a hostel in Colombo to accommodate cancer patients during their treatment in Maharagama hospital.

Those interested in helping this worthy cause could contact the association a. **Hounslow Business Park, Unit 1, Alice Way, Hounslow, Middlesex TW3 3UD. Tel: 081 572 2112. Fax: 081 572 4958.**

Appeal for Temple Building Fund

Mmabatho is the capital of the North West Region of South Africa. The Hindus resident there do not have a temple to cater to their religious needs. Their nearest temple is around 200 kilometres away. The Mmabatho Hindu Samaj which has been in existence since April 1990 has acquired a piece of land and lacks sufficient funds to construct a place of worship. It makes an appeal to Hindus, well wishers and benefactors to assist them in this Divine project. Further information could be obtained from the President, Mr. N. Prabhakar, Tel: (0140) 21228 (H) or the Secretary, Mr. M. Ramanathan, Tel: (0140) 892140 (W) or (0140) 813241 (H) or by writing to P.O.Box 751, Mafikeng 8670, South Africa.

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AUSTRALIAN NEWS LETTER

Annual Sports Day of Tamil Schools

There are six Tamil schools in the suburbs of Sydney and all these schools are now jointly celebrating community activities under one umbrella organisation called the NSW Federation of Tamil Schools.

The Federation has a common syllabus for teaching Tamil in these schools. It also has prescribed books and uniform progress reports for the schools. It conducts competitions and annual sports events every year.

The Annual Sports Day this year was held on November 6th at Meadow Bank Park. The Sports Day was well organised by volunteers from the six schools. The students were divided into groups according to their age and houses were allocated. Heats and finals of various events were conducted. The adults also enjoyed themselves in the relay races and tug-of-war. Mr. Ben Ball, the Chief Education Officer of the Ethnic Schools Board was the guest of honour. He congratulated the teachers and parents for their voluntary work and gave away the prizes to the winners. The office bearers of the NSW Federation of Tamils Schools, Mr. M. Gunasingam, Mr. S. Sivagnanasundaram and Dr. P. Nallathamby, as the President, Secretary and Treasurer, respectively, were responsible for the smooth conduct of the Annual Sports Day.

Awards To Ethnic Students

There are 500 community language schools in the state of New South Wales that teach 66 different ethnic languages. They teach 42,000 students.

The prestigious Education Minister's awards for excellence in student achievement is awarded every year to ten students. This year these ten students were selected from 180 applications from 34 language groups. Of the ten recipients of the Minister's award this year, five were from the Senior Section comprising Macedonian, Sinhala, Thai, Turkish and Ukrainian students. This awards ceremony is organised every year by the New South Wales Ethnic Schools Board and is sponsored by Telecom Australia. The Telecom Australia highly commended award winners were 59 from the Junior Section and 30 from the Senior Section. The Tamil recipients of these awards were Rajesh Jagadeeswaran, Shreeya Muttusamy, Pranavan Satchithananda, Shobana Sothirajah and Lavaniya Thevarajah in the Junior Section and Sivagowri Shanmuganathan and Meera Sivanathan in the Senior Section.

The only Tamil student to win the Minister's award was 14-year-old Anusha Arjunamani from the Bolar Malar Tamil School.

In her address the Minister, the Hon. Virginia Chadwick congratulated the award winners and said that these awards recognised students to the study of their own languages. 'Community language schools offer a unique form of languages education in that instruction is provided in the context of the identity, ethos and culture of the local communities' she concluded.

Colourful cultural programs like Robam Angre (pestle dance), the Red Shoes dance and the Sri Lankan Zoo Animals and Perahera song were performed to reflect the ethnic culture of the different communities.

Martyr's Day

The Tamil Tigers' Martyrs' Day was remembered in Sydney on Saturday 3rd December. Hundreds of Tamils crammed into the Burwood Girls' High School Hall to pay respect to the memory of the brave young men and women who had sacrificed their lives for the cause of Tamil Eelam. The program began with the observation of two minutes silence in memory of the martyrs. This was followed by the singing of songs mourning the death and celebrating the heroic lives of the Tamil martyrs. While these songs were being sung, people lined up to place lighted candles and flowers at the foot of a specially erected memorial to the martyrs. The flag of Tamil Eelam was then raised. This was followed by the welcome address by the Vice-President of the Eelam Tamil Association, Mr. Surendran.

An 'Isai Nadakam' by children depicting the political history of Sri Lanka since Independence was very well appreciated by the audience. The highlight of the evening was the documentary about the Black Tigers and their courageous attack on Palaly Airport in August 1994. It was a film that the audience found deeply moving. It served to remind expatriates of the unbelievable heroism and dedication of the Black Tigers to the cause of Tamil Eelam.

CANADIAN NEWS LETTER

Christmas in Canada

Christmas in Canada is a marvellous festival of lights. To us Sri Lankans, it is like 100 Vesak days put together. The world renowned Niagara lights is a sight not to be missed. Readers should take a cue from this and visit Canada in Winter simply to marvel at the lights even though it may be below zero for over 60 days!

Christmas celebrations were the dominant activity of all Tamil Organisations in the months of November and December. The most notable of them all was, 'CAROLS' organised by Rev. Bobby Mather for Sri Lankan School Alumni Associations, which decorate Toronto like a multitude of stars in the horizon. In addition to this, the Tamil Seniors had their own carols on the same day and attracted over 250 members with the Hon. Elaine Ziemba, Minister of Citizenship and Seniors Affairs as Chief Guest.

Tamil Issai Kala Manram

Come January, the lights give way to Tamil Oriental Music, with the ongoing programs sponsored by the Thamil Issai Kala Manram, headed by V. Sornalingam as president and R. Balasubramaniam as Secretary. This organisation is dedicated to the promotion of carnatic music – both vocal and instrumental. This manram conducts examinations based on the syllabus of the renowned North Ceylon Oriental Music Society. Annually over 200 students sit for these examinations and the certificates issued by the manram are held in high esteem.

'Tamils Information' – Anniversary Celebrations

The biggest event in Toronto in February each year is the anniversary celebration of the Tamil monthly – 'TAMILS INFORMATION'. This esteemed Journal has a circulation of over 4000 and it's editor is the well known journalist Thiru S. Thiruchelvam. The 4th anniversary of the issue falls on the 5th of February and the celebrations are to take place in the Toronto City Hall, with the newly elected Mayor Barbara Hall as the guest of honour. It is the custom on this occasion to honour people who have rendered yeoman service to the community, through a system of Awards. There are two annual awards. One for community service and the other for cultural enrichment. Moreover, three other special awards are reserved for Refugee Services, Social Services and Literary Services.

Appointed Presiding Justice of Peace

Mr. Regis S. Jogendra, has become the first Sri Lankan attorney-at-law to be appointed a Presiding Justice of the Peace of Ontario Courts (Provincial Division). Before coming to Canada, Mr. Yogendra was an Attorney-at-law and subsequently served as an Assistant Commissioner of National Housing.

Aloy. Ratnasingham.

Pithukuli Murugadas Sings at Siva Thondan Nilayam

The famous Hindu devotional singer Pithukuli Murugadas demonstrated his great devotion and reverence to Yogaswami of Jaffna by visiting the Siva Thondan Nilayam Prayer Hall at 256B High Street North, Manor Park, London E12 on 19.9.94 and conducting a bajan. This prayer hall has been established to propagate the teachings of simple ethical and spiritual life of Yogaswami in Natchinthanai which is a treasure of divine love and wisdom, most of these songs were sung by him during meditation and noted by his devotees. According to his teaching one could see God within oneself by meditation and not by renouncing the world.

Prayer meetings are held at the centre on the first Sunday of each month between 3 and 5 pm. Those interested please telephone 081-543 2126 for further information.

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A Registered Charity, serving the welfare needs of the Tamil Community in South London has immediate vacancies for the following two Part-time positions

ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT

(Funded by Trust for London)

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Salary: pro-rata £11,730/– inc. OLW (26 hours)

The applicants for this position should have —

- ★ Experience in all aspects of office administration
- ★ Computer skills and experience in Word-Processing
- ★ Experience in Book-keeping and Accounts
- ★ A reasonable experience/knowledge in welfare benefits and immigration advice

VOLUNTEER ORGANISER AND PROJECT WORKER

(Funded by Age Concern, England)

You will be responsible for successfully implementing the community care Project for the Older People using volunteers — A new Project of the Group

Salary: pro-rata £12,471/– inc. OLW (26.5 hours)

The applicants for this demanding position should have —

- ★ Personal interest in the care of the Older People and the ability to respond sympathetically to the needs of the Older People
- ★ Experience in working with Older People and volunteers
- ★ Experience in volunteer recruitment
- ★ Experience in Word-Processing
- ★ Organising skills

For both posts you will need:—

- ★ Fluency in both English and Tamil including interpretation and translation
- ★ Good communication skills and telephone manners
- ★ Ability to work on his/her initiative and with a proven track record to meet targets
- ★ Flexible approach and the ability to work well under pressure including working on Saturdays and during unsocial hours

For further details and an application form, please write, stating which position you are interested in to: —

The Co-ordinator,
South London Tamil Welfare Group
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